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MR. FORTNER'S MARITAL CLAIMS

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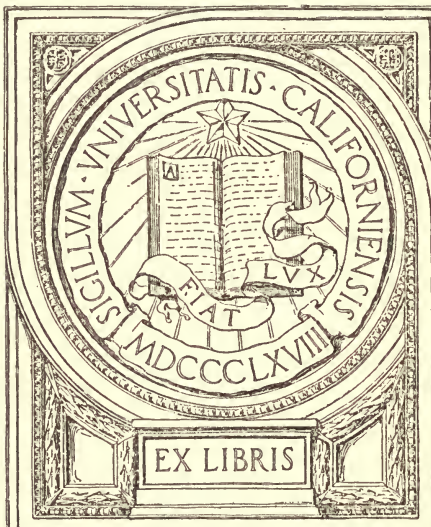

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Mr. Fortner's Marital Claims

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

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AUTHOR OF DUKESBOROUGH TALES
THE PRIMES AND THEIR NEIGHBORS, WIDOW GUTHRIE, ETC.

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PREFACE.

Of the stories in this volume "Mr. Fortner's Marital Claims" now appears for the first time. "Old Gus Lawson" was printed in the *Century*, "A Moccasin among the Hobbys" in *Lippincott's*, and "Mr. Joel Bozzle" in *Dixie*.

R. M. J.

Baltimore, Md., July 15, 1892.

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Mr. Fortner's Marital Claims.

CHAPTER I.

THE Fortners, long before I was born, had been living where they were when there occurred the incidents described in this story. It was two miles above the village of Dukesborough. The grove of lofty red-oaks and chestnuts made the square two-story mansion behind it seem low, and the latter would have presented a better appearance from the public road, two hundred yards distant, but for the lapse of years since it had been painted. Yet things inside and all about the yard were clean and tidy, and in the garden farther behind were some rose-bushes, pinks, jonquils, and any quantity of box. Mrs. Fortner (Mimy Pugely that was) born, brought up, courted, married,

and ever continuing to dwell there, had often complained and gotten some indefinite promises about at least one new coat for the house and one of whitewash for the palings; but there they stood just as they had been standing for nearly fifty years.

The head of the family, from his very youngest manhood, had been tall, slender, dark, and religious. The wife, of medium figure, slight in her youth, had now a little rotundity, owing, others said, to the good living she had always had, but more, she contended although smiling the while, to the work and the anxieties, and the other like things which had been her lot in this troublesome world. Many children had been born to them, some of whom had died, and the others, except Martha and Mary, the youngest two, had married reasonably well and settled not very far away. Martha, tall like her father with somewhat of his seriousness, and Mary, more like the mother, were both old enough to marry; but one thing and another had delayed them.

Not the want of beaux; for they were handsome, neat, and industrious. But it required a good many things to make a matter of that sort seem to fit satisfactorily all around. Martha, now twenty-three, had no fears of being called an old maid two or three years later on, and Mary, nineteen, merry-hearted, rosy, and round, behaved as if she regarded herself, and expected to regard herself always, as nothing but a girl. Both knew well enough that they needed to be in no great haste; for, after providing for their elders there would be enough of land and negroes left for them whenever it should be time. Besides, they were not the sort of girls who think they must surely be disgraced if not married by the time they are grown, or immediately thereafter. True, Martha for two years had been having her preference among the young men who came to the house, but nothing definite had come of it yet. She waited to see what time would do; and if it should appear that time would do nothing, then she would

consider if anything could be done without it.

Received into the church when so young that his "experience" had, in some portions of it, to be told by his parents and other friends, Jeremiah Fortner, the older he grew, brought forth more and more of the fruits which such early budding had promised. Such was people's respect even when he was a child, that his Christian name was never shortened to *Jerry*, but instead was softened to *Jaymiah*. My recollection is that the records showed that when he was made one of the deacons, he had only just passed his twenty-fifth year. Miss Pugely was of Methodist people; but she had made no delay in yielding whatever opposing theological sentiments she may have believed herself to have on the day when she made up her mind to say "yes" to Jaymiah Fortner's offer to make her his wife—that change being one of the conditions which she had to consider; and she made as good a Baptist as any who had been born so in

that whole congregation. As for her husband, there were some persons, in time counting in himself, who almost believed that, if every other pillar in that church were to give way, whether from too much sap or from dry-rot, or any other cause, Jaymiah Fortner alone could keep the tottering frame from falling. They used to tell an anecdote, which, although it may have not much to do with this story, I will relate just to show how conscientious he felt himself bound to be in his high official position. One Saturday morning not very long after his elevation to the diaconate, he was observed to limp somewhat and to be profoundly dejected all during the forenoon service in the meeting-house, and he was no better in the fore part of the afternoon conference. This was the title of the gathering at which used to be settled businesses of many kinds, denominational, social, and domestic. When such affairs as were then on hand, after the usual prolonged discussion, had been disposed of in ways, some expect-

ed, others quite the contrary, and when adjournment, which the young people as usual, were longing for, seemed to be at hand, the young deacon rose, and with a multitude of words brought an accusation against himself which he ended with an humble asking of forgiveness from the brethren and sisters. The gist of the self-accusing was the great anger indulged by himself against his old mare Puss, for some of her behavior that very morning while on their way to the meeting. When he had gotten far on in the narration, he said in humble partial justification:

"And it wern't I got so pow'ful mad at her a-stumblin' and a-fallin' down sprawlin', a-comin' down Crowder's Hill, because it were rocky, and she were tender-footed, and I weren't a holdin' the reins tight, it bein' I were studdin' on my juties as a deakin and not on old Puss a-fallin'. Nor I never blamed her, as she were obleeged to fall, for fallin' on top o' one o' my laigs; because I were obleeged to know that nobody,

nother animal ner folks is expected, when they goin' to fall, to stop and think and pick out how they're goin' to do it, and what on, and what not on. I'm thankful in my heart I were not that onreason'ble with any dumb creatur. *But*—and thar the shoe pinch—what made me so *bilin'* mad, after she fell on my laig, she wouldn't git off, a notishstandin' my hollerin' at her at the top o' all my woices, because it hurt pow'ful bad, my laig did, and I jes' *had* to holler and punch her in the side, and jerk her with the bridle, and kick with what purchase I had with my other laig, and cuff her on the head tell I mighty nigh sprained my hand. *And*, tell finil, I jes' had to gouge her eyes mighty nigh out before she'd move one single blessed peg to let me pull out my laig, which I'm thankful it didn't git broke and squeushed complete. And it were right thar, brer Mod'rator, that come in the whole sin and wickedness of the whole sitiation. And it ain't that I actuil *said* the words. I'm thankful I had grace enough left to keep from *sayin'*

'em, but as I lay thar a-gougin' o' the mar, I *thought* to myself, '*Damn* your eyes!' and it's for the thoughts o' them words, and that a deakin o' this church, I ask for the brothers' and sisters' forgiveness."

They gave it freely, and the penitent showed his gratitude by continual growth in fitness for his position.

Of all the members Mrs. Fortner was least hearty in felicitating. Busied with household duties, she, riding Little Puss, a colt of the mare, had come on later. Now Old Puss was with her quite a favorite, having descended from a dam come from her father's estate, and being destined to transmit her name and virtues through many generations yet to come. When late that evening they had gotten quite out of town, Mrs. Fortner, after looking far behind to see if any others were in hearing, said:

"Jaymiah Fortner, I think you went ruther t'other side of what you was called on this evenin' by you a-gitting up and a-making of me a ruther ashamed of my-

self by your long languages about Old Puss a-falling on top o' your laig, and you a mighty nigh went to the length of cussing her while you was a-gouging of her eye, which it now look red and watery like it was fit to go thes out. What seem to me you ought to told, ef you must git up and tell something, it were that no longer than day before yisterday I told you that mar was tender-footed and she oughtn't to be rode till she were shod. And my opinion is you'd 'a' done better to've done as I told you, than to have to git up after the other business was through with and keep the conf'ence from breaking up in some sort of time for people that's had no dinner excepting of a cold snack to get out in time to have got leastways a decent supper, and which it do seem to me a'most scan'lous the lenth of time is took up at them Sat'day meetings with things that some of 'em have got—seem to me —they've no business there; and as for your cussing o' Old Puss' eye——"

But at that moment she spoke sharply

to her nag, who loped on ahead, and feeling that the words would not be quite proper to be spoken aloud even by one as hungry and as much hurt as she was, she only soliloquized:

"If any cussing *had* to be done betwixt you and Old Puss it seem like to me Old Puss, if she had a mouth *for* cussing, she were the one to do it."

Housewives, some as good as the sun ever shone upon, must occasionally complain of those meetings whose sessions, seldom needing more than a few minutes for the dispatch of necessary business, were protracted sometimes hours in order to let people like Mr. Fortner take off the last feather of what burthens were on their minds, or exhibit their powers in counsel and debate at these, their only opportunities. Mr. Fortner had a pleasant compassion for these harmless frettings and like drawbacks to the high felicity of being his wife, but sweeter far on this evening was the retrospect of the victory which he had gotten over himself and men's opinions. More elate

could hardly be the thoughts of one who both ruleth his spirit *and* taketh a city.

Yet, plain as this talk was, nothing was behind or beneath it to mar a conjugal life which had been and was to continue to be happy, with one brief interval, for very many years to come. Mr. Fortner was of all men in that community the most pronounced adherent of the sentiment of St. Paul the apostle concerning marital authority. His wife, submitting like other good women, never raised an issue except when she honestly believed such authority to be strained beyond what was fair. For near half a century they had never had an out-and-out quarrel. Mrs. Fortner's views of matters and things in general, as she frequently said with mild firmness, were her own, and attempt was never made to hinder her in giving expression to them. Her very distinct individuality she could not have suppressed if she had tried ever so hard, and if her husband had been put upon his oath—perhaps not otherwise—he must have admitted that on many even im-

portant occasions when their judgments had conflicted, results had showed hers to be nearer the truth. Indeed, their contests for domestic supremacy had been fewer and smaller, because often he had thought that he was leading when in fact he was being led by both an understanding and a discretion superior to his own. Yet now that he had grown old his virtues seemed to have become more hard and his consciousness of general superiority more pronounced. Occasionally, when in the society of old or elderly married men, he gave more pointed expression to thoughts which were foremost in his mind.

"I'm thankful to the good Lord for two things; and the first one of 'em is him a-makin' me a man 'stead of a woman, and second, him a-lettin' me be a Babtis' 'stead of a Meth'dis'. Because, if I had a accident been a woman, a person with the head I've got, they would been danger of my bein' ruther obstinater than the 'Postle Paul allow women to be; and if I'd been a Meth'dis', it make me a'most trimble to think

what a scatterin' I'd a made o' wrong doctring. Yit, they weren't nigh the danger o' *that* as of the t'other. Because I had the Scriptur' before me to go by soon as I learnt to read, which I done when I were nine year old, and I knewed even then I were right, same as I do now. But I suppose it ain't give to everybody to always see their way perfect cler. Now my wife, Mimy Pugely as was, as you all know, were Meth'dis' when she were a girl; but when I made a dead set at her with my argyments o' one kind and another, she couldn't no more stand up before 'em than so much stubble could stand up before a light'd knot afire. She have a right good, strong, hearty will of her own, she do at times; but in genil, and special when I cote the 'Postle Paul on her, she know how to other moderate down or else drop the subject; and I'll say it, that in the long run she have made about as good, faithful, reason'ble companion as the common run of women anywheres, I don't keer where you go to look for 'em."

Yet not very far away was the time when he was to deem it needful for entire security in his domestic rule to invoke outside help. In the State of Georgia at that period (fifty years ago), the common law of England in the matter of marital rights obtained, with the addition of statutory enactments giving to the husband absolute ownership of all the wife's property real and personal. Married women, as a rule, particularly in rural communities, acquiesced without complaint in conditions which their own fathers and other nearest male friends almost without exception approved, and there was as much domestic happiness as elsewhere. Marriage settlements were very rare, separations more so, and applications for divorce were never heard of. Yet in the old age of Mrs. Fortner, when she was required to make a sacrifice which seemed unconscionably exacting, she felt that she had the right to offer resistance.

CHAPTER II.

THE nearest neighbors of the Fortners, as you went farther up the road, were the Hollys, whose family consisted of widow, her son Jack, and daughter Susan. Their dwelling was a story and a half house, on the roadside, with no grove except four or five white oaks, backed by a plantation not as large as the Fortners', but with ground fully as good and more fresh, the tending of which by Jack with their moderate negro force produced all that the family needed, and more too. What the thoughts of Jack, now twenty-five, were, and what for some time past they had been about the Fortner girls, nobody knew as well as he himself and Martha. His mother (and it seemed to him rather unfortunate) was a Methodist, and one about as strong as they generally make—the stronger perhaps because that denomination in the community was in a woeful minority.

Jack, a loyal, brave fellow as you could find anywhere, sometimes said:

"As for me, I don't take much stock in church business of any sort—not, I know, as much as everybody ought; but as ma belongs to that party, and 'specially as it's so weak around and about here, whatever's in me that can be counted at all on that line, I'm with ma; of course without I get converted and then get convinced that Methodist ain't as ginuine a article as any of 'em a-going. I'm not a going to promise *nobody*, like Josh Farmer had to promise Mr. Fortner before he could get his daughter and afterward make the half-and-half Babtist he does. No, not me!"

The more courageous he was, the more surely he engaged Martha's affections; yet she had not quite answered "yes" to the most interesting question which he ever had put to her, although she had intimated several times that, but for her prevision of her father's opposition, she might have done so some time ago. She thought it was due to Jack to say in ad-

dition that she was and expected to continue to be hoping for the best; but if in time, in good time—that is, in reasonable time—she should be convinced that hoping for the best should have no other result than increasing prejudices and protracting disappointments, there was no telling what she would do. And so Jack waited, not having much confidence that this hoping for the best was going to do any very great things, but looking to what was to happen when it should prove to be a dead failure.

"A excellent woman Missis Holly is," Mr. Fortner often said to his wife; "a uncommon, excellent woman. One o' the excellen'st it have been my lot to ever knew, that her equil, exception of you, in the waitin' on and the settin' up with the sick, and the layin' out o' the dead, it is yit for me to git a-quainted with. It do seem like pity she won't read and study to her satisfaction the writin's o' the 'Postle Paul, where he tell about in *Romans* about princ'pal'ties, and powers, and everything else that tries and can't

sip'rate; and then, if she'd set down and read keerful about them a-babtizin' in Enon, because they were much water there, it do seem like to me a honest person like her would be obleged to give in. Now there's Susan, sweet as a pink and juicy as a peach; and there's Jack, that they aint a industrouser ner a judgmaticler farmer in this whole settlement of people; but they both of 'em has to be hilt back in jes that kind o' style, that, to my opinion, nother of 'em have read the Scriptur' fur theirself, but think they must go with their ma thick and thin, snolus-bolus,* which it all go to show what prejudice is and that it'll go from gin'ration *to* gin'ration."

"Laws! Mr. Fortner," she sometimes answered in weary indifference, "of course it's all from the way people is raised."

"Of course, my dear, which it make the case that much pitifuller. Well, my hopes about the Hollys is that they'll come in after a while, like the 'lev'nth

* If Mr. Fortner had been a Latin scholar, instead of these words he would have said—"*nolens, volens.*"

hour people spoke of in Scriptur', but which sech people always can't help from knowin' they're paid more than their work's worth, which if it wer'n't in the very *word* o' Scriptur', I couldn't never see the jestice of sech a settlement to them that's been a-workin' in the win'-yard a' constant."

"Yes, I suppose. Maybe, it's all so. No doubt about Jack and Susan being nice young people, certain."

"They know nothin' about their Meth'-dis doctring, what they is in it, and keer nothin' about it, and, to my opinion, 'twern't for that wide-mouth preacher Woody, they could be converted easy in no time; and if brer Wheelright wern't so mealy-mouth, they ain't no tellin' what couldn't be done with the whole of 'em. I wish in my soul he were half as strenious as Fortner Glaze."

"Umph!" said his wife, and it was all she did say.

Susan Holly was indeed a fine girl with her little figure, light complexion, blue eyes, with manner and everything else to

match. She was about as much Methodist as the Fortner girls were Baptist; and these, especially Mary, had almost as much fun as she did with the Rev. Elias Woody, who was circuit-rider that year, and who was wont to stop more often than seemed worth while, considering the smallness of the flock that gathered at the poor little meeting-house at the other end of the village, and spend one night and maybe another at the Hollys'. He was about six-and-twenty, quite above medium height, strong, bushy-haired, ruddy, exuberant in health, abounding in cheer, and as handsome as he was entertaining. He had rather more culture than the average among the rural clergy, and his full share of the faculty of speaking with effect in public. More cultured and more serious was the Rev. Isaac Wheelright, of about his age, and not unlike him in appearance, who, on the demise of old Mr. Swinney, had been called, over the vote of Mr. Fortner and a few others, to the pastorate of the Baptist church.

"I didn't vote for you, brer Wheelright," Mr. Fortner thought he ought to say, when the young man came to his charge, "but it were because I were afeared you was too young for the business. Yit, I never made a streenious opposition, a-'memberin' that Timothy, young as he were, it never hendered him from a-bein' a power, and even a favorite with the 'Postle Paul."

"I thank you, brother Fortner, for your sincere words," he answered; "I mean with the help of your prayers and of the rest to do the best I can."

Yet the old gentleman rather resented the action of the majority, and he was somewhat proud when some of his predictions seemed, at Wheelright's very first sermon, to promise fulfilment. The discourse met with little favor from him, but it was well received by the congregation, including the few Methodists who were present. Maintaining firmest adherence to the tenets of his own faith, yet he expressed entire respect and Christian brotherly love for those who conscien-

tiously held to a different. After the service was over, Mrs. Holly said to Mrs. Fortner:

"I want to get acquainted with that young man. I don't know when I've listened to better Gospel preaching that went straight into my very feelings."

"That you shall."

When the preacher, shaking hands all around as he came, had gotten where they were standing under an oak, all the Hollys were introduced to him.

"They're Meth'dis', brer Wheelright; but they're our neighbors, and better friends and honester people nobody ever ought to want to live by. The being of Meth'dis, hain't hendered their being both that nor them."

"They're the main things at last, sister Fortner. I am glad to make your acquaintance, sister Holly, and your children's."

Then he passed on to others.

"I thes knewed from that sermon he were a good man," said Mrs. Holly when they were on the way home. "Old Mr.

Swinney, poor old man, he's dead and gone, but he never could preach such a sermon as that to save his life, and he never said 'sister' to me one single time in the thirty year I knewed him."

"You think he's as handsome as Mr. Woody, brother?" asked Susan; "I declare he's certainly like him."

"There it is," said the mother; "I bound for girls looking out for handsome, as they call it these days."

"I mean handsome for a—for a preacher, of course, ma."

"Oh, yes—of course, of course! But you know you meant no such thing. Now as for me, I weren't thinking about any handsome. What *my* mind was on as he stood up there, and every bit as good-looking as brother Woody, was the good solemn word she said, special about them that ain't all of his way of thinking, that some of their preachers don't do—like poor old Mr. Swinney, which he's dead and gone; but it looks like he thes *couldn't* open his mouth in the pulpit without dragging we poor Methodists over the coals."

"Like our preachers do with the Babtists—eh, Susie?" said Jack.

"Our preachers," insisted the mother, "never do such a thing except where they deserve it for their close communion, and their predestinism, and such things as the Scriptur' is perfect plain aginst. Yes, Susan, I think he's every bit and grain good-looking as brer Woody; for his hair is curlier, and his eyes another sort milder, and a beautifuller hand and mouth I wouldn't wish to see. Yes—well, you two may laugh; but my eyes can see well as anybody's; and what's more, my ears can hear, which yours don't seem to did, Susan!"

And so they went on all the way home.

The Fortner Glaze aforementioned was a fifth or sixth cousin, living beyond the Oconee River, who had been coming over occasionally to see his kin, and who at his last visit had intimated to Martha that, if she felt like it, she could get him for a husband. Martha answered nothing, and he decided that the way was clear. He was a stout, darkish, confident, im-

mensely voluble young man, particularly when talking about John the Baptist and the Jordan River. He was not a member of the church, because, as he informed them all, he was waiting to settle himself, as all at home were anxious for him to do. His fiery discoursings upon Baptist doctrines, from the largest to the smallest, commended him to Mr. Fortner, who, being told that his father was of respectable means, was well disposed toward the idea of having him for a son-in-law. Glaze, upon taking leave the last time, had informed him of what he had said to Martha, and the nod which he received was satisfactory. The rest of the family after his long visits felt relief at his departure. Treating him with all of the respect due to a guest and kinsman, yet they grew tired of his ceaseless talkings and his boundless conceit.

"I do think," said the mother, when last he had gone away, "that he's the fullest of himself and John the Babtis' as a water milion is of meat, and when him

and your pa git on the 'Postle Paul, it actuil make me want to get up and go off some where and—and—well, at such a time a body can't tell what they *do* want except to git away from sech everlastin' ding-dongin'."

"I'm sorry he's any kin to us, myself," said Mary. "If he'd been the gentleman he lays such great claim to, he'd have not joined in so quick with pa's complaining of Mr. Wheelright; and as for what he said about Mr. Woody, that was scandalous."

"Of course it was," said Martha; "I don't believe a word of it."

"Well, my daughters," said Mrs. Fortner, "such people gets to the end of their row in time. Come, go to your sewing. Your cousin Glaze have put back work. By-dy, my cousin Glaze," she said slowly, with mock affectionateness, looking toward the gate as the parting guest was shaking Mr. Fortner's hand.

Then they laughingly dispersed to get to their work.

CHAPTER III.

JUST as Mr. Fortner had foretold, a friendship, soon amounting to intimacy, grew up between the two young preachers, upon which the aged deacon looked with feeling not very far on this side of disgust. If Wheelright had begun his pastorate with a vigorous attack upon the Methodists, he might have been a reasonably acceptable son-in-law, notwithstanding the fact that he had no property of any sort besides his profession. For in that relation, Mr. Fortner might hope to control him as he had controlled the late Mr. Swinney. Not a single conversion from Methodism had been made by that zealous partisan; yet it was a satisfaction to recall his passionate admonitions and the scorching chastisements inflicted upon the reprobates who had refused to give heed. But the idea that a stripling of a pastor, pretending to have a head of his own, should become a member of his family, and then,

while uncontrollable in the pulpit, have to depend upon him to make up what would be necessary for family support over and above the poor stipend paid by the congregation, was not pleasant to think about. Then his mind, captivated by the partisanism of Glaze and what he had said about his father's properties, had already consented to a match between him and Martha. But one day, happening to overhear his wife and daughters talking contemptuously about this cousin, he became angry, the more so because he kept the feeling to himself. His love for his wife was the strongest feeling in his being. Yet he had never quite found this out, because of his failure to subdue her will entirely beneath his own. Grown old, his judgment become impaired, like many others in such condition, he deemed it important to continue, and with yet more asperity, a struggle which although it had never led to actual quarrelling, had resulted in defeats that in the increasing decline of his vigor became harder to

endure. And so it was that being not well pleased with the frequent visits of Wheelright to the house, he fell into a habit, after some chatting upon indifferent themes, of leaving him with the girls and going off by himself to ponder what was best to be done. In the unconcealed disgust of his family for Glaze, he imagined a defiance of his authority and disregard of his feelings, and, for the first time in all his married life, he conceived toward them a sense of resentment. It might have been better if he had spoken it out; but it was too painful for that. Then, if it should fail of the desired results, things would be worse than now. Affectionate as before in words and deportment, attentive to his every want, Mrs. Fortner, conscious of greater need of firmness than ever before, foresaw a crisis and took all pains to be prepared for it. She said to her daughters:

"You girls be particular to never dispute with your pa, not for one single word, no matter what he say, even if he call a day a Chuesday when you know it's

a Wensday. Jest say 'yes, sir,' and 'no, sir,' to everything he say aginst Mr. Woody and fer that Fortner Glaze, a including of them insiniations aginst brother Wheelright. It's a-going to take the levellest best of me and me only to paddle this canoe, and it'll only bother for you to put in. Remember what I tell you, to let it be jest 'yes, sir,' and 'no, sir,' with your pa."

Several weeks passed before the next visit of Glaze. In this time the girls and the young men met quite frequently, and there was a good understanding all around. In a community simple and upright like that, any scandal of the sort which Mary had referred to lately must soon become generally known. Wheelright openly expressed his disbelief in its truth, and Jack as openly denounced it as a slander. The tale was that during the previous year, while Woody was on his first riding in Putnam County, of which both he and Glaze were natives, in one of his tirades against the Baptists, he had said that in the sacrament of bap-

tism, over which that sect made so great ado, sand would be as efficacious as water, and that when the words were charged upon him he had denied them with an oath. On a late visit across the Oconee, Woody heard of the report, which had been traced to Glaze, and he made up his mind straightway what he would do. Mr. Fortner was delighted with the horror he felt at the awful news, but was intensely irritated that neither Wheelright nor any one of his own family credited it after he had declared his entire belief in its truth. Yet, as before, he kept his resentment within his own breast where it was nursed with assiduity.

It so happened that on the afternoon of Glaze's arrival, Woody, Jack, and Susan came to the Fortners. At the introduction to Glaze, Woody said:

"I know Mr. Glaze very well by sight. Indeed, I was introduced to him last year at the Putnam camp-meeting."

"Possibly so, sir," said Glaze. "I've been made acquainted with a good many

people. Some of 'em may've slipped my ric'lection. I remember I did go to that camp-meeting one day just for curiosity to see how they carried on." Then, glancing toward Mr. Fortner, he continued: "I'm told you're very strong on fallin' from grace."

"Oh, yes, oh, yes," was the cheerful answer, "especially when a man has never had it."

Then he turned and began laughing and talking with the girls.

"Now as for things like them," said Mrs. Fortner calmly, her teeth nearly closed, "my opinion is the pulpit's the place for *them*, if they is any."

Mr. Fortner and his cousin rose immediately to retire. As the latter was leaving, Woody said to him:

"You'll be here for some time, won't you, Mr. Glaze?"

"Can't say, sir. May or may not; depend on circumstances;" then he went on out.

The man's coming, this incident, and the sight of its effect upon those present

served to exasperate Mr. Fortner yet more. In imagination he saw Wheelright become Methodist, and, with Jack Holly weaning his remaining daughters from filial affections and obligations, and, what was yet more appalling, from the religious faith which was the only means of escape from death eternal. He went to bed with the resolution to go next morning into the village and take counsel with some of the older brethren whom he might meet there.

That same night, after Mrs. Holly and Susan had retired, Woody said to Jack:

"Perhaps it wasn't exactly right to feel so; but I was delighted when that fellow attacked me this evening, because it showed both his bad manners and his aggressive spirit. But I tell you now, Jack Holly, that my fingers itched to get hold of his throat. I rather think I did give the damned lie to his slander. At all events I thought it, as I've heard tell about a confession of Mr. Fortner on a certain trying occasion. I'm much obliged to you for having confidence

enough in me to denounce it. I know the scoundrel well. He pretends to be a manager of his father's business, but the old man attends to that himself, and the whole family would be glad to get rid of him. As for the number of Baptist girls that have kicked him, nobody but himself could tell. He has feathered Mr. Fortner's eyes with his everlasting talk about John the Baptist and the river Jordan; but it is plain to me that Mrs. Fortner sees a good way into him. So does Wheelright, grand fellow that he is; but they don't see quite through him. To make them do that is going to be my business as soon as I can get a lick at him out of women's company. I intended to go over to Putnam to-morrow in order to see the bishop on a very special matter; but I shall not go until I can have another interview, and in different surroundings, with that learned and otherwise interesting young gentleman. On the whole, I feel first-rate. Glorious girls, aren't they? Let's go to bed. I'm off."

"I say, Jack," he sent back as he was moving off, "curious talk for a preacher, isn't it?"

CHAPTER IV.

FROM an intimation of Mr. Fortner to Glaze on his arrival that he suspected an attachment between Wheelright and Martha, Glaze at once began to bestow his special attentions upon Mary, who would have suited just as well a man in his circumstances. At the supper-table Mr. Fortner remained grimly silent while he talked on and on in damning praise of Wheelright and bold denunciation of Woody. He was very sorry, he admitted, to hear of the close intimacy between them and much afraid of its consequences.

"For I tell you all here at this table that I know all about that fellow, Woody. He's a snake in the grass. You saw how he tried to insult me this evening, which he'd have knew better than do if it

hadn't been in company of ladies. I wouldn't have spoke to him if Cousin Mimy hadn't interduced him to me, which, of course that were the thing to do in her own house."

"My patience, Fortner!" said the lady, "the man hadn't the slightest idea of insulting *nobody*. It seemed to me that he were only jest a-trying to show that he some ruther you wouldn't be fetching up about Meth'dis' doctrine when he were perfect surrounded by Babtis'es, excepting Jack and Susan, who he know keers not one baubee about Meth'dis' or Babtis' and I've no doubts is tired like a good many other people by hearing of 'em ding-donged in their ear when they ain't occasion fer it."

"The more their shame!" said Mr. Fortner. Then swallowing hastily the last of his coffee, he rose and went out. Next morning after breakfast, he and Glaze rode into town, it being the day for the weekly mail. When they had gone, Mary said:

"I wish I could never lay eyes on that

man any more. It's a perfect shame to have to be any kin to him."

"You better be thankful, child," said the mother, laughing, "that it isn't any closeter. I noticed him a-eyeing you last night like he used to eye Marthy."

"Ma, do hush! Well, he may eye on; but let him open his mouth to me one time as he did to sister, and I'll give him something that——"

"Come, now; come, now, Mary. If he tells you he wants you, jes' tell him 'no' and be done with it. I don't want your pa to git into a passion with anybody except me. He's that now, and it's coming to a head fast. Last night he kept me awake with his groaning I don't know how long, and once he got up and lit the candle, and got the Bible, and read awhile in it, and he left it open where he been a-reading, and I knewed he left it for me to see it this morning, and it was in *Corinthans*, where the 'Postle Paul talk about women, and what they shall do, and what they shan't. I never

let on nare a single word; but I tell you it's a-coming to a head."

"Mr. Woody knows how he's been talking about him, so Jack says," said Martha.

"Of course he does," said Mary, "and I wouldn't be surprised if Fortner Glaze heard from him, if he thought there was any use in bothering with such a creature."

"I wouldn't care much if he did," said the mother; "for that might bring your pa to see how he's fooled in him. Still sech as that is never women's business, and you girls be very partic'lar how you talk, special with your pa, who in all the time I have been living with him, I have never knew him to be that wrapped up in anybody like he is with that Fortner Glaze, that I'm thankful he's none of *my* blood. Your pa have got old, and he's like other old people that think the less judgment they've got, the more they've got. But you two leave everything to me, and say nothing to your pa but 'yes, sir,' and 'no, sir,' and the sooner this

thing come to a head, the better it's going to be. Get to your work; I must go and see what sort of a dinner I can get up fur your 'stinguished' cousin. I see he like good things if he's fit for nothing else."

Devoted as Mr. Fortner was to the *Christian Index* and the *Southern Recorder*, the former the organ of the Baptists, the latter of the States' Rights party, he first went to the house of Mr. Leadbetter, a brother deacon, in order to let out some of his grief and to counsel with him about his domestic troubles. Mr. Leadbetter, a good partisan both in religious faith and in politics, was reasonably content to wait and listen and sympathize, and pour in oil where he saw an opportunity. These were his last words at the interview which was suddenly interrupted:

"Brer Fortner, it seems to me that if it was me, I should try to be keerful how I act, and try not be vi'lent. The 'Postle Paul, they ain't no doubts, like you say, he have a-pinted plain to women

the end o' their rope; but women somehow, ahem! they have got to be of not o' the same kind as in them days when he writ. They has more eddication and they've got another sort of backbone, and my expeunce is it won't do to run it on 'em too heavy, which sech as that is apt to do more harm than good. Now you acknowledge yourself, and everybody know, that sister Fortner is a uncommon good, useful female, and have done a power of good in the congregation in a mild, and, I may say, in a example way. And as for Mr. Woody a-comin' to the house, why they isn't no family in all this section that like to jest shet down on people a-visitin' them that behave theirselves as they tell me he do, which I must go as fur to say for my part, that what little I have saw of him, he seem like a ruther gent'many young man in his behavior, not'ithstandin' him bein' a Meth'dis' preacher; and brer Wheelright say——"

"Don't tell me what brer Wheelright say, brer Leadbetter. I were 'goin' to

git on him after a while. Brer Wheelright——"

At this moment their attention was called to some unusual movements at the post-office a few rods distant.

In the piazza of the store where the office was kept sat near a dozen men, including Wheelright. The reading of their mail was interrupted by Glaze, who was enlarging on general Baptist themes, mainly John the Baptist and the river Jordan. In the midst of his gush, Woody rode up. He had come by the Fortners and seemed to be in first-rate health and satisfactory spirits. Halting, dismounting, and fastening his horse at the rack, he ascended the steps of the piazza. The speaker suspended his oration and looked as if he had become suddenly disgusted.

"Good morning, brother Woody," said Wheelright, "I'm glad to see you. You know most of these gentlemen, I suppose. This is brother Hall; this, brother Askew; Mr. Parker; Mr. Bowden. Of course you know Mr. Glaze?"

"Oh, yes," he answered, after shaking

hands with the others, "I know Mr. Glaze well, very well." Then, without looking at him or extending his hand, he passed to the offered chair, seated himself, and, playing with the riding-switch in his hand, looked cheerfully around. The sudden embarrassment of Glaze, who only a few moments before had spoken of the young preacher in contemptuous phrase, was noticed by all present. It seemed to fret him that they laughed with polite good-humor at the playful chatting between the clergymen, and he retreated to a corner at one end of the piazza. Finding that position not to his liking, in the midst of one of Woody's repartees, he moved impatiently toward the steps, looking toward Mr. Leadbetter's house as if he meant to join him and Mr. Fortner. Woody rose quickly, and, putting himself in his way, said:

"Mr. Glaze, please wait for a few moments, won't you, until I can mention a little matter, about which I'd like to ask you a question or two."

Glaze looked fiercely into the smiling face; but something whispered to him that he might as well pause, and he did so, the while bestowing upon Woody a look as admonitory as he could improvise. Loosening his cravat and contemplating with satisfaction the switch in his hand, Woody said:

"I am glad to find you in the midst 'of your friends, sir. In their hearing I ask you to say whether or not you have been repeating in this community what I know you have been reporting about me in Putnam County—that I had said that, in my opinion, sand would answer the purpose in the sacrament of baptism as well as water."

It had not been half an hour since Glaze had repeated the charge again, and so he could not but answer promptly, although with evident reluctance.

"I have, sir," he said partly defiant and partly not. "I told it as it was told to me. I wish to have nothing further to do with it, sir."

"Perhaps so. It is natural, consider-

ing that what you have had to do with it already is more than enough. But as we have gotten thus far with it, and as an opportunity so favorable may not occur again soon, we may as well finish it up. Who told you that I said so?"

Glaze, before replying, looked around among the men as if, in a party matter of such importance, surely he could count upon their support.

"I don't know as I can ric'lect who it was told me, sir, and, if I did, I don't know that it's my business to tell you. But I'll tell you this for your satisfaction: that I heard when the thing got to you, you said it were a damned lie."

Then he looked around again, as if he felt that he had scored a point.

"Yes, sir. That was told you, I suppose; and it had some truth in it. As for the first, which is a lie out and out, you are the sole author of it. You know you lied, when you said in the hearing of Mr. Henry Bass at last Putnam County Court, that I had used that language at Rockville; and you know that you would

not dare to face Mr. Bass and deny your words."

"You're a preacher, Mr. Woody."

"And if I wasn't, what would you do? To facilitate your answer, let us suppose that I'm a preacher no longer. Now, sir."

"Then, Mr. Woody, I — ahem! I should say you—I think you are mistaken, sir."

Woody laughed a loud, exultant, bitter, wicked laugh.

"When I denounce you, which I do in the presence of these gentlemen, as a liar, a base, cowardly, shameless liar, you are content to answer that you think I am mistaken. Yet let me do you no injustice. Your statement as to how I characterized your slander was substantially true. If there be such things as damned lies, and I have no doubt there are, that was one; and your baseness is only the meaner in that you never came to me to demand retraction of the words, and that you do not now. Now, Fortner Glaze, while on my way here this morning I cut this young hickory with intent, if you be-

haved with any degree of insolence, to use it upon you. As it is, I will put up with less rigorous chastisement."

Seizing his arm he drew him facing the street, then getting behind, thrust him down the steps. Then he said:

"There is your horse, and yonder lies the road back to Putnam County. Move on! I am on my way there myself, and it will go another sort worse with you if you let me overtake you this side of Park's Bridge. In that event I will wear upon your back this hickory till nothing is left of it but the handle!"

Glaze went for his horse, struck out in a brisk canter, and if ever he came again on this side of the Oconee, nobody in that community ever knew it.

"Gentlemen," said Woody, turning, "please accept whatever apology I owe for my part in this business. I couldn't well see what else to do with it."

"He was served exactly right," said Mr. Parker.

"I won't say he wern't," said brother Hall.

"Nor me," said brother Askew.

"Walk with me a little way, won't you, Mr. Wheelright?" asked Woody, taking his arm. They set out together, Woody leading his horse.

CHAPTER V.

FEW words were spoken by either until they reached the end of the village. There they turned into the Methodist church-yard, and sat down upon the trunk of one of the trees that had fallen and not been cleared away.

"The sight of this poor old place," said Woody, looking at the building and around the neglected yard, "makes me sad, especially in view of something I am going to tell you, Mr. Wheelright—after a little while. I am glad you were present at my interview with that man a little while ago, painful as it must have been to you. At such a time a man naturally wishes for at least one whom

he believes kindly disposed to him to be near."

"You may rely with entire confidence upon my feelings toward you, brother Woody. I was, indeed, intensely pained; yet I felt earnest sympathy with what I knew you must have suffered yourself."

"Thank you, thank you. I may as well say to you, first as last, that I am now on my way to the presiding elder of this circuit in order to report to him my intention to withdraw from the sacred ministry."

Seizing his arm, Wheelright said:

"Brother Woody, surely not—surely not! I beg you not to act precipitately."

"Now, I know you are my friend. But let me tell you: there is no precipitation about it. I have been revolving the matter for many months, even before I was assigned to this circuit. That my bishop knows, and I have been acting upon his advice to await the time which I have taken for just consideration. I would have gone several days ago, but that I knew that this man was to be here,

and I felt that it was due to myself and—all around, that I should meet him here and expose his character. I hope you don't consider that I was too hard on him."

"I don't see," answered the other, smiling, "how you could have been any harder, Mr. Woody; still, considering the provocation, I—well, *I* should earnestly hope and pray never to be subjected to such a temptation. You saw what my Baptist people, one of them a deacon, thought of it."

"Yes, indeed; and it supported me wonderfully. The truth is, Mr. Wheelright, I was drawn into preaching—if the mouthing which I have done in the pulpit may be so called—without due reflection. While in the midst of sore grief for the death of my father about two years ago, I joined the Church, and felt that I had a calling that way. My mother and sisters, understanding my temper, opposed, as far as they felt that they could do so with propriety, the movement. But I went on in a very short

while, and without a particle of preparation."

"May I ask if you have been entertaining any doubts regarding the form of your religious faith?"

"Not so much," he answered smiling, "as about any calling that ever came to me to preach it. I am naturally very impulsive and passionate—not revengeful, I hope and believe, but resentful to injustice; entirely too much so for a minister of the Gospel. I am sure those good Baptist brethren think so after that exhibition, when I felt more like strangling the scoundrel than hurling him down the steps."

"I am sorry to hear this, brother Woody, and I am sorry for this last occurrence, thinking how it may affect what I know is a very earnest aspiration with you."

"I am thankful to be able to say that consideration of that matter had nothing to do with this change of vocation, and that if it had any effect upon my conduct toward Glaze, it was only to precipitate

it. I was conscious of some eagerness to show Mr. Fortner as soon as possible, and before he knew of my intention regarding his daughter, that the vindication of my reputation was entirely outside of any care I had for her affection or his favor. Mrs. Fortner understands me well; so does Mary, bless her heart! I am all right there, my friend; and however much they may be pained by this affair with Glaze, it will not alter relations which have been fixed definitely this very morning. I doubt if I should have let the fellow off so mildly but for his kinship to Mary. I told them that I meant to charge him with his slander, and publicly, if I should get an opportunity. They answered not a word; but I am sure that they believed it ought to be done."

"I congratulate you cordially. But, my dear friend, I am sure you don't understand brother Fortner. This affair will drive him far, far beyond the point where your Methodism has separated you already."

"It may be. Still, I couldn't consider

that. Well, it will serve to hurry up the crisis which Mrs. Fortner says he's bent upon making. She calls it coming to a head. A right good simile. I've no doubt that I have pricked the boil to-day."

"Do the Hollys know of your decision about the ministry?"

"Not quite; that is, I've never told them in words. But they suspect, and will not be at all surprised. What do you suppose sister Holly said when I informed her of my family's opposition to my entering it? She laughed and said she wasn't sure but what they were right. No; Methodist as she is, to the backbone, she wants nothing that militates against the right and everybody's full liberty. That *you* have first-rate reason to know."

"Thank you."

They rose, and, after shaking hands with much cordiality, Wheelright returned into the village, and the other mounted and cheerily rode away.

CHAPTER VI.

ON Jeremiah Fortner now came the severest trial to which he had ever been subjected. Of thorough integrity, intending to be just with everybody, yet he was a clansman and a partisan to the last degree. It cut him deeply that a kinsman, whom now he loathed, had been exposed and punished ignominiously among a set of Baptists, including his pastor, by a Methodist—even a Methodist preacher. What exasperated him yet more was the necessary thought that not only these persons, but his own wife and daughters would approve Woody's action, and thus gain or seek to gain, at a time when it would be specially pernicious, ascendency over himself, their rightful head. Without another word to Mr. Leadbetter when the affair was over, he got on his horse and rode back home. As he neared his gate he saw Jack Holly issuing from it. He had noticed Jack's riding to the

post-office at the moment of Glaze's departure, getting his mail, and turning away. On entering the grove he heard merry laughter, which was suddenly suppressed. Then he knew that Jack had reported the news, and they had been exulting over it. Consumed with anger he hastened on, and, even while ascending the steeps of the piazza, said:

"You all think it's the thing to do to be laughin' at the disgrace of the whole family!"

"Marthy and you, Mary, special you, Mary, 'member what I told you. Go 'long in and 'tend to setting the table for dinner." Then, calmly resolute, Mrs. Fortner said:

"Mr. Fortner, *I* don't feel any disgrace have been put on this family."

"You don't!"

"No, sir, I don't, nare a 'bit; not the littlest part of nare a' bit."

He was too angry to wince, and so he said:

"That man shall never darken my door agin, and if he ever comes inside of my

gate ary nother time, I'll set the dogs on him."

"Who you talking about, Jaymiah Fortner? Jack? Jack Holly?"

"No! You know well enough I'm not a-talkin' about Jack Holly, albeit's my intention to tell Jack Holly that his room's better than his company. But I'm a-meanin' of that Meth'dis' preacher—that's who I'm a meanin' of. You know who I'm a-meanin' of, and you needn't try to deny it."

It was the hardest thing he had ever said to her. She paled for a moment, but recovering, answered with a mildness that provoked and was meant to provoke yet further:

"And you think the time have come when it's got to be your duty to hurt the feelings of the nighest and the best neighbors we've got, and all for that Fortner Glaze, that, if my children's father ain't ashamed for them to be kin to him, their mother *am*. And, if it's so to be, *I* ain't in it."

"You won't darens't go agins me,

which you know the 'Postle Paul give a man the a'thority over his fam'ly."

"The 'Postle Paul! The *A*-postle Paul! I've been a-hearing about the 'Postle Paul *every* sence I wern't big enough to know no more than my own blessed name. My own father, if my mother had let him, would a-mighty nigh run her ravin' distracted a-freckwent a-going on about how the 'Postle Paul think so little of women that they mustn't daresn't open their mouth without their husband give 'em leaf, an' sence I jined the Babtis' it appear like if anything, they're yit more streenious. *But*, *and*, *as*, for you a-flaring so all up about Mr. Woody a-knocking of Fortner Glaze down them post-office steps, they isn't nobody, Babtis' or Meth'dis', who won't say it oughtn't to been done by *somebody*, preacher or what not. And as for you a-threat'ning to set the dogs on him, which is new languages in this house or a're 'nother respectable house in this whole neighborhood about the way to treat folks that comes a-visiting people—why,

you can thes *do* it, although I have yit to learn that the 'Postle Paul ever ordered anybody to do sech a scan'lous thing. *And*, as for your as good as ordering Jack Holly to keep off these preemerses, it's as good as driving Marthy off of 'em, which the dear good child is promised to Jack, if the poor things will ever think they can make the connection."

"What? What you say, Mimy Fortner? I thought brer Wheelright were——"

"No, sir; brother Wheelright have been nothing of the kind. Brother Wheelright have no notion of Marthy, nor Marthy of him, and there's two reasons for it. One is, they both knewed you'd be against it if they were, and what's more, there was other people both of 'em liked better."

"Do you mean that brer Wheelright is after Mary?"

"No, I don't. Brother Wheelright have been after Susan ever since here he have been, and he's bound to overtake

her, because she's nigh about run down, and have give her consent to be overtook."

His feelings against his pastor took presently another form, and he said:

"Ah, ha! I prophesied they wasn't much in him when he come here, but I didn't dream of his marryin' of a Meth'dis'. Yit I ain't surprised—that is, I ain't surprised complete. But I thought that man Woody were after Susie."

"Well, he wern't. That man Woody, as you call him, is after somebody else, and she too have he overtook when it come for you to say the word."

"Do you mean Mary?" he asked, aghast.

"That's who I mean. Mary Fortner, and nobody else."

"And you tell me she and that man have been making of a plot?"

"No, I don't. They have just felled in love with one another, the same that young people does and has been a-doing ever sence Adam and Eve felled in love with one another in the g'yarden. It's

been no more, and it's been no less. Now what you got to say?"

Her judgment was that it was best to drive him at once to the extremest point. His anger was made the more intense by the sight of her defiant fearlessness, and the recollection that it had always prevailed in the few serious domestic combats which they had had. It was painful in the extreme to feel that, as in the church, so in his family, he was losing the control which for more than two-score years he had been having almost without dispute. It shamed him that Wheelright had not even cared to win either of his daughters, and his resentment against him, therefore, was kindled to a degree that made him sick at heart. Hardly more painful was the thought that the man who had disgraced Glaze, whom now he could not but despise, should aspire to Mary's hand. Feeling that all these things had come upon him unworthily and because of the suspected weakness of his old age, he looked at his wife in silence for

several moments, as if the love of fifty years had turned to hostility and hatred. Finally, he said:

"I'm a-goin' to sell this place and move clean away out of this neighborhood. I'd better be dead and have my dead body trompled on than have to be run over on all side that-a-way."

"Nobody wants to run over you, Jaymiah Fortner; and you ought to know, if they did, I'd be the one to die before it should be done."

"I'll sell this place and move away, clean away."

"If you do," she answered, in a low voice, "I won't go with you."

"What?"

"Not one step!"

"We'll see about that! Ah, ha! We'll see about that! If I can't ex'cise some a'thority give me in Scriptur, I shall fetch up this whole business in the church, and I'll do it this very Sad'day comin'."

"It's been that I been a-expecting you'd do, and you're welcome to do it.

It's jest as well to come to it first as last."

"Them is your conclusions, is they?"

"They are. And now I've got my business to 'tend to."

And she went off upon this errand.

CHAPTER VII.

THIS was on Tuesday. During the three days following Mr. Fortner spoke seldom to any of his family. His anger at the sense of disrespect for his authority was too deep for words. In spite of his resistance, some respect for Woody arose in his mind, which served, however, to make the purpose which he contemplated only more resolute. There was no change in the deportment of his wife and daughters. On Saturday morning, he said to the former:

"You goin' to meetin', ain't you, Mimy?"

"Yes, sir, I'm going to meeting, Mr. Fortner; but being as it's I feel like it's more a-going to a court-house than any-

where else, and I want to get my senses together what of 'em is left; I some rather go by myself. I may be late; but I'll get there before time for conference."

"Have you been a-prayin' reg'lar, my dear?" he asked in sincere sympathy.

"I ain't so pow'ful much at praying, Mr. Fortner—not nigh as much as I ought to be; and I ain't one that love to talk about what little poor praying I *do* do. Besides, there's things on my mind that it seem to me praying isn't the only thing that's been needed in my case. I'm nothing but a woman; that, as she have no rights, she isn't expected to have any feelings. Sometimes I a'most wish I could get rid of them I can't help from having, like cows, that when they move 'em away from their young, they'll low and they'll mow for a day or two, and then they'll quit and go along quiet where people leads 'em, or drives 'em. You can go on. You'll ride Puss, I suppose. I can take John if he's not wanted too bad in the plow; and if he is, I can walk."

"You know you'd ruther ride Puss, Mimy; and you know that if anybody have to walk, it ought to be me, and I ruther for it to be me."

He spoke in affectionate tone; for he sincerely pitied the humiliation to which stern necessity was forcing him to subject her. Taking his hat and cane, he walked into the village, arriving at the meeting-house more than an hour ahead of time. There he chatted with first one then another of the brethren, several of whom, from their manner, seemed to be remonstrating respectfully. Without staying to listen to their words he passed on to others. The men looked at one another, some gravely, and the rest with meaning smiles.

"Old brer Fortner is just crazy, or nigh about it," whispered one.

"No," another said, "he's mad and *will* have a fight, and he's goin' to git awful bad whipped out. You know he never could listen to reason when his dander gets up."

As Mrs. Fortner was about to start, Mary said:

"Don't get too excited to-day, ma."

"Oh, honey, I shall try to keep in some sort of bounds. I shall let 'em know I think me and my children have a few rights, and if they say we haven't, then I shall let out on 'em with some of my feelings, which they'll find I've got *them* well as they have. You girls see to things while I'm gone, and soon as you see me at the gate coming back—if I live to get back—make Judy begin bringing in supper, whatever of it's cooked done, because I just know that the egzitement I've got to go through with, it's going to be absolute nessary for me to have something to eat soon as I can get it to get my strenth back. You better fetch me a tumbler of milk now to start with."

"It will all come right, ma," said Martha assuringly.

"I don't know how it's going to come nor how it's going to go. There, you may fill the tumbler half-full again."

Swallowing the milk, she smacked her lips resignedly, went out, and after mounting, called out:

"Mary, tell Ander to see that Puss' colt don't get hurted. Go 'long, Puss!"

The good mare struck into a brisk amble, and her mistress was in her seat before the first hymn was ended.

The pastor spoke with more unction than usual for a Saturday sermon. "Be of good comfort," was the text. In affectionate, occasionally eloquent words, he commended cheerful submission to the conditions in which Providence has placed us. Let all remember that the highest happiness, next to efforts to help in advancing the glory of the Creator, consists in making as happy as possible those around us. To do this often requires the yielding of one's own will, and sometimes even prudent relaxation of recognized authority.

During the discourse several eyes often wandered toward Mr. Fortner, who, throughout, regarded the preacher with stern fixity. In the intermission his wife did not leave her seat. He went out with the others and chatted with some whom he had not met previously. All

saw plainly that he neither desired counsel nor heeded remonstrance.

"Brother Fortner," said Mr. Leadbetter, "were always rather heady, but I never saw him as dead sot in his mind as he is now. The poorer shote of a fellow that Glaze were, it look like the worse he hate that preacher for punishin' him, when everybody else know he done right. Brother Fortner know it too; but somehow his old age have broke out on him so suddent that he can't hold hisself in. I can't but hope he can be brought down to some sort o' reason'ble. What I'm a'most afraid about is the egzitement it may fling sister Fortner intoo, that they isn't a finer woman in this whole congregation o' Babtis' ner, as to that, in this whole region of country, I don't keer how fur and wide it is; but if her dander git up, the fur is jest obleeged to fly som'ers. I tried to git him to leastways putt the thing off till another munt; but he say no; if the cong'egation keer nothin' for the 'Postle Paul, it's high time for it to come out. Knewed brer

Fortner forty year and better. *Never* see him in sech a tar'in' swivit before."

After a few minutes they re-entered the house, and the preacher, for the time, according to the purely democratic government of the denomination, being divested of clerical importance, and made what was termed *moderator*, took a chair at the foot of the pulpit, and called to order. The business, so pleasing to elderly men, so tedious to the younger and the women, except a very few, dragged itself along for an hour or so, and would have dragged far longer but for the silence of Mr. Fortner, who during this time seemed to be conning the indictment which was on his mind to prefer against the wife of his bosom. When the moderator announced that if there was no other business before the conference he was ready to hear a motion for adjournment, a profoundly sorrowful groan came up from the great deep of Mr. Fortner's breast. Then rising, he began. It was evident that he had studied carefully the words which he intended to pronounce with all the mild-

ness yet with all the dignity which the occasion demanded. Of his prolonged discourse I can report only the exordium and the peroration. Glancing toward Wheelright with qualified respect, he said:

"Brer Mod'rator, if I ain't mistakened in my a readin' o' Scriptur', the good Lord in the beginnin' made 'em male and female; that is, he first made 'em male, and then he made 'em female, which he taken one of Adam's ribs when he were asleep a-cording to his purpose, a-includin' mostly the raisin' o' childern to multiply the land he give 'em to ockepy and their gen'ration, him a-seein', I no doubts, that were the convenantest way to do it. *A—a—and*——"

But pages on pages would be required for even a synopsis of that speech. Among other things was his own solemn protest against being regarded as opposed to females as a general thing, because, indeed except for one of them which was his own mother quite a long time back, he would not be there standing on his present legs on that interesting, solemn,

and present occasion. Nor would he deny that in the long run females had their use without which society—well, indeed, society—fact is, society, that is, you may say, in the course of time more or less—why, society must unavoidably die out and be no society of any sort. It was therefore that he wanted to put himself right on these points before the brethren and sisters. The main thing with women was for them to find out what their use was, and then stick to it; and if they wouldn't, then they would have to take the consequences. He closed with these words, which he hoped were both apposite and delicate:

"And now, brer Mod'rator, with these few remarks, I'm sorry to have to say that as my desires in my own family have refused actuil and positive to yield to me as their lawful head, I have made these few remarks for the brothern to decide the case betwixt us. And my humble hopes is the good Lord will send his mercies and his blessin's on us all—a-includin' of my wife, which, Mimy

Pugely as was, in some p'ints of view, I say it bold, she's as good a wife as any that goes."

Then he sat down and covered his whole head with his bandana.

"Brother Moderator," instantly rising, began a young man, "I move we ad——"

Noticing that Mrs. Fortner was rising, he stopped, saying: "I yield the floor for the present."

The defendant was trembling with emotion. She wished that she had stayed at home, so sore was the pain of resentment kindled for the first time against her husband, whose words, as they sounded to her, showed that in his breast the dominant feeling toward women in general was contempt. Tears coursed down her face, and the violence with which she wiped them away with her handkerchief told how hot was the anger that had forced them out, and how, in decent regard for appearances, she was trying to stifle them. All except her husband regarded her with intense sympathy.

"Brother Moderator," she began, "I know, even if the Scriptur' hadn't said it, that it's a shame for women to let their voice be heard in the church, and the good Lord know if any woman were ever ashameder than I am this minute, I pity 'em. *But*, as everybody know who Jaymiah Fortner is a-p'inting at by the not a-yieldin' to his desires, as he name it, I feel like it's my duty to my very children a not counting in myself at all, to tell this congregation whether they'll believe it or not, that as for the yielding and the humoring I have been a-doing for Jaymiah Fortner for forty-nine years going on fifty the fifteenth of this coming September the—why the very multip'clation table would have to be brought in to tell the number o' times."

At the murmurings of favor following these words the handkerchief was torn from Mr. Fortner's head, and his face showed that already anxiety had begun to cast out all other feelings.

"I won't deny," she continued, "that he have been one of the best husbands any

woman ever got married to, if sometimes not often but sometimes he have got fretted because he have wanted me to do and I wouldn't things that wern't for the best which if he was pinned down to kiss the Book he'd be obliged to say I'm telling of the truth. But there's one thing and special since he have got old, that his eternal and his everlasting a-coting the 'Postle Paul on me when I've done right or honest tried to do it, it have made me so tired sometimes that fact is I never pestered myself so very much about *what* the 'Postle Paul thought about women be it little or be it nothing as long as I was trying to do the best I knewed how. But in the long run in the very longest run I have humored Jaymiah Fortner and fixed things to suit him and saved him all the worry and all the trouble, could in the raising of our children and everything else a woman in a family is called on for, and a-even tried to not get clean wore out with his never being tired of norating how contempible and good-for-nothing the 'Postle Paul thought

about women in general, only sometimes I acknowledge I have a'most wished *in* my heart the 'Postle Paul had have a wife and knewed for his own self how it is about things, that they isn't to my honest opinion, they isn't any lonesome, disappinted bachelor ever *did* live that know all the worry and the trouble and the one thing and another that married women has to go through with."

Not once did she turn toward her husband, nor note his appealing looks and gesticulations.

Then her voice lowered.

"And, brother Moderator, what's the desires my husband complain I ain't willing to yield to, and think it's a need to fetch me up in the church, that I always *did* believe it was better to let such things settle theirselves the best way they can at home? Why, it's to break up in my old age and move away from the place where I was borned at, and always lived at, and got married at, and my parents died and left it to me and they both of 'em lays buried there back o' the

g'yarden, and four out o' the nine children I've bore to Jaymiah Fortner lays there too, under the cedars and the chainy-trees, and the girls has planted rose-bushes there and althys, and cape-jes'mines, and lilocks, and lagestreamers and some wild olives, and they ain't a grave there that hain't a little bush of some sort at the head; and many time of a Sunday evenin' I take my Bible and I go down there and I set down on a bench, and—and——" But seeing the handkerchiefs rising to faces female and male, she paused, gave herself an indignant shake, resolved to hold on some longer at least to the strength which she was losing, and, in argumentative tone, continued:

"Now, brother Moderator, I've been a-reading in *Corinth'ans*, where it say, 'Let not the wife depart from her husband,' and I have never no more wanted to part from Jaymiah Fortner than I have wanted to part from my very soul and body. When I were married to Jaymiah Fortner the Scriptur' and the law of the land give

me and all I had to him; but they didn't do it any more complete free than I give myself, jest like I give my name of Mimy Pugely that was; and I jined the Babtist Church for nothing else *in* the world but because he belonged there, and I thought it was right, and I wanted not to be sip'-rate from him in not one single thing. And, therefore, if any departing is to be done by anybody, it will be Jaymiah Fortner a-departing from me and not me from him, when he move away from a place where there is too many things to keep me from being willing to be dragged away from it at my time of life, when he knows—and he hasn't forgot, because he promised it if he outlive me—that I have picked out the place where I want my grave dug. And if I have to be turned out of the church, why it'll just have to be done, that's all. For I couldn't go different if I was to try and keep on a trying. And I'm wore out clean complete with this day's work; and all the time I've been in this house and on this unuseless business I been a-hearing of

my poor mar Puss a-whickering after me in the grave-yard grove out yonder because she know that *I* know it were high time three hours ago and over that she were took home to her colt. And my own children and all my other business has been and is now a-needing of me which is the very last one of these uncalled-for scattery words that I'm that mortified in my mind I got no more to say about it."

She turned, went humbly out, and if ever a good beast showed joy at the coming of her rider it was that same Puss.

"Poor Puss! there, there! Missis is as bad off to get home as she is; there, there!"

Just as she was mounting the horse-block the people were emerging from the house, and one of the young women sent by Mrs. Leadbetter ran to report what had happened after she had left, and beg her to delay for congratulation.

"Thanky, Lizzie, honey; tell your aunty, thanky. Puss nor me can't stay any longer. Go on, Puss!"

And Puss went.

For several minutes during the defence, Mr. Fortner had been stretching forth first one arm, then another, in mute piteous appealing. At its close, he rose with both extended, but before he could open his mouth, the member who had yielded cried, saying:

"I claim the floor, brother Moderator, and I move that this conference do now adjourn."

"Second the motion!" came from a dozen voices.

Over the sound of the voting, Mr. Fortner's trembling voice rose with the words:

"Oh, brer Mod'rator! Oh, brothern and sisters! I take it all back, all, all, *all* back!"

Then he sat down and wept as he had not since he was a little child.

It was nearing nightfall when he left the ground, for he must say to individuals what he had said in public, and pour out praises upon praises of her who was dearer than his life. Fewer things could have

been lower than the humbleness with which he slowly wended his way. The bare suggestion of his departure without his wife had excited a fear which was appalling in the extreme. He had not dreamed of such a scene and such an overthrow. During her passionate declamation, she seemed to have been endued with all the beauty of her youth, and there was revived in his breast more than the eager love with which half a century ago he had sought her in the house whither he was going. How could he have so strangely deluded himself about her loyalty to him? He must be growing older in more ways than he knew. Among his thoughts was one of much sadness, even of some sort of compassion for his favorite apostle, and he recalled how far back in the past he was removed, and reflected that perhaps some at least of his uninspired teachings might as well be regarded as doomed to become obsolete. One thing, if no more, was fixed in his mind with certitude firm as the earth on which he trod, and the heavens above

it—it was that while breath was in his body he would never again quote, in the hearing of Mimy Pugely that was, that saint's words touching the powers of men and women's obligations.

The fifteenth day of September was fair, serene, sweet in autumnal promises, and blessing was on the gathering and the feast. The old bridegroom, more gallant and gay than fifty years before, believed that they were the fittest words to bestow upon his bride when he declared that she was fairer than all her daughters.

Old Gus Lawson.

"With pleasing toyes he would her entertaine."
—*Faerie Queene.*

CHAPTER I.

IT is interesting to think of the ideas that used to be held by parents, and by many others who were not parents, about the importance of the rod in the education of boys and girls. They seemed to believe that a child of either sex, good bad, or indifferent, could not be expected to get satisfactory development without receiving during that while an amount of flogging that in these days would be thought enormous. But the one who held this notion with greater confidence than any person with whose opinion I ever had opportunities to become acquainted was neither a parent nor a grown man, but a schoolboy.

I do not remember how it came to pass that Augustus Lawson, even in the earliest of his teens, began to be called "Old Gus." Most of the girls, however, not willing to be regarded as wanting in decorum, called him "Mr. Old Gus." Old Gus—now, after the lapse of more than fifty years, I cannot feel like speaking of him by any other name—had been a big baby, and he had been growing bigger until the period of the beginning of this story, when, eighteen years old, he was six feet four inches tall, and weighed one hundred and sixty pounds. He had reddish hair, a face very fair, but with so many freckles that a goodly number of them, not caring, as it seemed, to be crowded so much, had emigrated and colonized prosperous settlements upon his great, long hands and fingers. He had very large, pale-blue eyes and an extremely small mouth. This mouth was never entirely shut, and it was doubtful if it could be. Always lazy about books, and rather so about work of any kind, during the seven or eight years at school

he had learned little more than a smattering of English grammar, geography, and arithmetic; yet in this while had gotten whippings that in numbers were like the hairs on his head and the freckles on his face and hands. When he had come to be eighteen, his mother, a widow with a small, nicely kept dwelling and a moderate property in land and negroes, residing a mile south of the village, wished him to stop from school and go to work upon the farm. But he begged for another year, and as he was an affectionate son, and, besides, rather shiftless about any sort of field or domestic business, she consented.

"The simple fact of the business," he would often say, "it is jest about this: I've been a-goin' to school so long, and I've got so many whippin's while I were a-gettin' of my edjication, that when it was complete, and I don't need no more, I got so that I jes loves to be thar, a-knowin' how much good it have done me, and me, a-endurin' the time, a-not knowin' ner a-expectin'. I don't git

whipped now, of course; but somehow, with my expe'unce, a-knowin' what good they is *in* whippin', I loves to set thar and see it a-goin' on."

Those who had been with him in his younger time used to say that Old Gus Lawson did not mind a whipping any more than it was minded by any old, rusty-coated apple-tree. It was certain that during this last year, in which he was taking leisurely his post-graduate course, his enjoyment of what he called the fun of the thing was great when one or more of his schoolmates received the discipline which was so beneficial. Especially was this the case when the recipient was a girl.

"Because," he argued, "wimming, it's their business not only to be mothers, but it's their business to be the very bul'arks of society, as them people that makes Fourth o' July speeches calls 'em, and it won't do for 'em to be raised wrong. I tell you that, now."

Yet he loved the fun as much as he valued the utility. Without a grain of

malice, or envy, or jealousy in his nature, still I have witnessed, often and often, in his great big face a delight that was up to the full when boys or girls were crying out under the infliction of the rod. Indeed, when matters in that line became rather duller than he could have wished, occasionally he would endeavor to enliven them in ways that I will tell about after a while.

There was not a single boy or girl in the school who did not like him; for, besides being as amiable in disposition as anybody in the whole world could be, his willingness to do favors for others, especially us little ones, was boundless. But after using the word "boundless" I have the thought that perhaps I ought not to have done so until I came to describe his pockets. I remember him as clothed never otherwise than in his long, baggy, walnut-dyed breeches and waistcoat, over which, with varying shades of gray, was the longest frock-coat, and, open from the outsides of the skirts, it had the widest, deepest pockets that I

had ever seen before or that I expect ever to see again. In those pockets, as well as in those of his other garments, he carried habitually such articles—chiefly eatables—as children, especially girls, were particularly fond of—bits of sugar and ginger-cake, peaches, apples, and other fruit of any and all stages before and after ripeness, especially crab-apples, with small packages of salt to go along with those which he gave to the girls, who were intensely fond of eating them in school hours, when making wry faces over their sourness was attended with so many risks. Then in these store-houses were hickory nuts, chestnuts, walnuts, chinkapins, hawberries red and black, marbles won at sweepstakes, balls made of strips cut from worn-out india-rubber shoes and wound with woollen thread, slate pencils and lead pencils that he had picked up, goose quills for making pens and toothpicks. Whatever period of the year it was, Old Gus on every morning brought these vast pockets full of stores of one kindoran-

other, and during the rest of the day distributed as freely as if he had been another Santa Claus. Besides these things, behind the lapels of his coat and waistcoat and on his sleeve-cuffs were any number of assorted pins and needles, the latter already threaded, so as to be ready for sudden emergiencies in his own or others' clothing. And people may believe me or not, just as they please, but it is a fact that he never was without a small vial of camphor, and one of opodeldoc, or other salve for healing, and strips of cloth for bandaging cut fingers, skinned noses and chins, and stumped toes. The girls used to say that he was the very convenientest boy in school, and I have heard some grown persons say that it was their belief that if he were to go upon a journey of a week he could carry in his pockets supplies to last him throughout. As for his pocket-knives, I think best to let them go into the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

POCKET-KNIVES being articles that in a school are subject most often to be called for on loan, Old Gus was seldom without as many as four ranging in original value from sevenpence (twelve and a half cents) to half a dollar. These he would lend freely, the worth of the instrument loaned depending partly upon the age, partly upon his estimate of the carefulness and responsibility, but chiefly upon the sex of the borrower. Reasonably gracious in this respect to boys, even the smallest, he was never known to refuse a loan of a knife of some sort to the request of a girl. Yet there was one, small and four-bladed, with a white handle, claimed to be of ivory, but declared to be nothing but bone by those who were refused the use of it. This knife, which he often said with much solemnity had come all the way from Augusta—the favorite city of all middle-Georgia people—and had there

cost a dollar one and nine (a dollar and thirty-seven and a half cents), was kept wrapped in a piece of buckskin, and carried in one of his vest pockets; and two persons, and those two alone, could ever get the loan of it. No boy ever dreamed of such a thing as asking for it, with any hope of success, and every girl but two forebore, except occasionally for the mischief of seeing the trouble that refusal cost him. These were Miranda Attaway and Sarah Ann Shy.

Miranda was a small, slender brunette, pretty, but thoughtful-looking and tongue-tied. For the purpose of untying her tongue, as it seemed, she had contracted the habit of thrusting a minute portion of the end of that member out of her pretty mouth and pressing her lower lip against it, which habit, in spite of its leading her to be called "tongue-sucker" by some of the ruder boys, made her look very interesting. She was about twelve years old, although she looked younger. Sarah Ann, of the same age, was fair, fattish, and red-haired, like Old

Gus, but without a freckle, except an occasional one that took advantage of her carelessness about wearing her bonnet, and lived a brief life upon her lovely cheek. Almost always she wore a smiling countenance. The exceptions were when she was being whipped for her pranks in school-time. While these exceptions were numerous, they were evanescent, and interfered little with the fun that she gloried in making. Her parents dwelt a mile east of the village, those of Miranda half a mile south in the direction of the Lawsons. Both families were industrious, plain people, and lived well on the small income arising from their property.

These girls, so unlike, were almost constant companions, occupying the same desk in school, being the very front of those assigned to the girls. The seat of Mr. Hodge, the teacher, was at the fireplace, facing both rows of desks. Old Gus, being so near a man, was allowed to have a whole desk to himself; and that next to the wall at the end of the

schoolhouse, in the rear of Mr. Hodge. This gentleman, although not of the very best temper in the world, yet was not at all cruel, as some schoolmasters, I am sorry to say, used to be. He whipped freely and conscientiously, but seldom very hard. It seemed as if he was apprehensive that, unless he whipped with the spirit and regularity exacted by the public, parents would become dissatisfied and turn him out of his office, or that his scholars might lose some of the respect which they had for him, and perhaps the boys, whenever they would want a special holiday, and could not get it otherwise, might "bar him out," or take him to the spring-branch, not far off, and give him a ducking. I think that his mind was to do no more whipping and no less than what was necessary to satisfy his patrons, to save from decay his reputation, and to keep his position entirely secure and comfortable all around. He put Sarah Ann in front, because she was the most mischievous girl in school. Miranda he would have allowed to settle as far down

in the row as she might have chosen; but Miranda preferred to be alongside her best friend, and take the consequences of such contiguity. Indeed, the truth is that Miranda, notwithstanding her serious-looking face and her soft, rather pitiful voice, had in her own way nearly as much love of fun as Sarah Ann.

There was another cause why Old Gus had been so favored in the matter of position. Mr. Hodge, for convenient and prudential reasons, was not disposed for him to be where he himself could constantly observe his actions. Then, this position was the very one Old Gus preferred, because his two favorites were just in front of him, and convenient both for enjoying the sight of their interesting faces and conferring upon them, by signs and otherwise, such assistance as his judgment decided that they needed and his great fondness for them would not allow him to withhold. In the next chapter I will endeavor to show in what manner this charitable service was bestowed.

CHAPTER III.

CONVINCED of the wisdom and kindness of his reasons for thus helping these little girls, Old Gus often gave expression to them about in this wise:

"You see, I can't help likin' Sarann some, because she's red-headed like me; and then she's so mischeevious that I loves to be on hand when she's a-cuttin' up in the schoolhouse, a not expectin' Mr. Hodge to notice her, and then him come down on her with his switch. And then it sweeten me down to my very bones to hear her holler, and make out like he's a mighty nigh a-killin' of her, when he ain't a hardly a-hurtin' of her a single bit, but is a-givin' it to her because he know people is a-expectin' him to keep up the a'thority of his school. Now as for M'randy, she ain't red-headed, as people can see for theirself, but she's mighty nigh as fond of her mischeevious as Sarann, a notwithstandin'

she look so solemn exceptin' when she's obleeged to laugh at Sarann or me, one or t'other. And when she do begin to put up her little tongue-tie pleadin' to Mr. Hodge, and the man he have to actuil stop before he have give her half as much as she deserve, because she look so pitiful, and beg so pitiful, I declar' on my soul that it make me feel like laughin' so I'd jes holler out, if it wern't in the schoolhouse, because they ain't any fun that is equil to it. And but, besides all that, it do 'em some of the good they need bad, in a-loosenin' of their skin, and lettin' 'em git their growth out of the little teenchy things they is. I've had the expe'unce of whippin', and I call myself a example of the good it do, not only to boys but to girls, in gittin' 'em out o' their runty fix in which they're bound to keep onless they're whipped; at least occasional, and, of course, reasonable in the case of girls. This is what make me take such a likin' to both of them children, and I couldn't keep 'em, even if I was to try, from takin' out of

my pockets anything that ary one of 'em wants."

It was interesting to see his relations with them. Liberal with all, both in giving out his supplies and lending his knives, yet there were two favors that were restricted to Sarah Ann and Miranda, one of which was the loan of his dollar-one-and-nine knife, and the other, taking with their own hands whatever they wanted out of his pockets. This last liberty the larger girls did not desire, and they would not have accepted the offer of it. But Sarah Ann and Miranda! Knowing that they had full command over him and all his store, their habit was to pick and choose according to their varying wants.

"Thtop, Mithter Old Guth, and come here," Miranda often said; "me and Tharann want thomething, and we don't egthactly know what it ith."

Then, one on one side and the other on the other, they would dive their hands and arms up to their elbows, haul out and empty into their aprons quantities

upon quantities, and, after selecting such as they preferred, dump back the rest. During this while, looking down upon them alternately with much fondness, his little mouth would make as big a smile as it could.

"That'll do," one of them would say; "you may go now."

"That all you got to say?" he might remonstrate. "Them other girls have got some manners, but you two——"

"Oh, we thank you, Mithter Old Guth," Miranda would plead, "jutht ath much ath they do, but whath the uthe of thayin' tho every thingle time? People thath alwayth having to thank people get tired of it after a while. You know jutht ath well ath you know anything that me and Tharann like you the betht of all the boyth in thith thchool. Don't we, Tharann?"

"Of course we do," Sarah Ann would answer; "but he came mighty nigh lending our Augusty knife the other day to Susan Leadbetter."

"You know I didn't want to lend it to

her, Sarann Shy, and I didn't. What's the use o' your plaguin' me that way, Sarann?" he would humbly remonstrate.

In such wise Sarah Ann and Miranda would tease him sometimes. Susan Leadbetter was the only girl whom they regarded as possible to get between them and Old Gus. For the Leadbetters were good people adjoining the Lawsons, and having about equal property. And then Susan was at all, handsome girl, and so nobody would have been surprised if Old Gus in time were to conceive a special partiality for her. But thus far he had never shown any sign pointing in that direction, and it was one of his boasts that he never had been in love in all his life.

"Ah, Mithter Old Guth," Miranda said one day, "I've heard old people thay bragging ith dangereth." Then taking hers and Sarah Ann's knife out of his waistcoat pocket, she unwrapped it, and, handing him back the buckskin, said:

"There, don't you go and lothe it, or

let it get ruthty." Then she went her way.

Gratified as he was by the growth made by his favorites, still its rapidity was not entirely satisfactory. Therefore, partly for the purpose of enhancing it, and partly for the sake of the fun, he managed sometimes from his retired position to throw them into laughter which, on being detected by the master, would be followed quickly by desired results.

"Oh, my!" he said often with greatest glee, "it's positive music to hear 'em when they're caught. Sarann farly bellers; but when M'randy comes out with her keen little tongue, that it's all so tied up, if it don't sound sweet, the same if it was a little young bird, and I'd actuil feel sorry for her if 't weren't for the good I know it's a-doin' of 'em both, that it mighty nigh seem to me it'll take more whippin's than any one of 'em gits to make 'em grow of any size worth talkin' about, let alone the ever bein' among the bul'arks o' society. And so, occasion'ly, when things is down, and I

see them children a-needin' o' some stirrin' up, I wait to git their eye when Mr. Hodge ain't a-noticin' of 'em, and then I come the squir'l a-gnawin' at a hickernut, or a rabbit a-eatin' greens. They can't stand nary one o' them, special in the schoolhouse, and then you ought to see how the little ones in general, and them two in partic'lar, how they can't help bein' caught a-giglin', and so be took up and whipped. I ain't never afeared of their peachin' on me to Mr. Hodge, because they know if they do, no more crab-apples and things from me, which crab-apples is things I despises myself without they're b'iled along of a whole lot of sugar to take some o' that everlastin' sour out of 'em; but it's astonishin' how many of 'em them girls will destroy, special when you give 'em salt to go 'long with 'em. Yes, sir; they know better than to go to work to break up that business. No; they ain't no such low-down meanness in *our* school."

The performances thus referred to were so funny to the girls that their benign

intentions always succeeded. The very idea of a person so big, long, and slow-moving claiming to personate as small and nimble a beast as a squirrel or a rabbit was absurd to the last degree. Ridiculous enough was the former with his hickory-nut between his forepaws, digging, or pretending to dig into the shell with his long, white teeth. But the rabbit at his meal of collards or turnip greens was yet more interesting. He used to declare on his very honor that this was done faithfully to life, as often he had watched from a crack of the fence around the garden or turnip-patch and witnessed the scene. If he had not a leaf from one of the trees in the grove, provided for the purpose, he improvised with his copy-book. It was curious as well as irresistibly laughable to observe his actions while in the rôle of this favorite animal. The curve in his back, made so from inactivity mainly, but partly from the habit of getting down nearer to a level with those whose company he liked most, became much more

noticeable as he bowed his head over his leaf. As interesting were his facial expressions. Practice had made him perfect in broadening his eyeballs, giving greater roundness to his profile, flattening his thin lips, and passing his teeth through their various playings and contortions, and the most dainty, modest, seemingly embarrassed, even almost painful, way in which, moving the while his long ears forward and backward, he munched in silence and with great rapidity first one and then another edge. It has been very many years since these and such like things occurred; but I often recall them with vivid distinctness, and in imagination look upon and listen to them, not with loud or suppressed laughter as when a child, but with smiles and with tears so fond that I feel as if I could be willing, even glad, to undergo the old-fashioned punishment, if but for a brief little while I could go back to childhood, and see for myself, and see and hear Miranda Attaway and Sarah Ann Shy look up at dear Old Gus Lawson

eating his greens, laugh their laughs, and take their whippings with the rest of us.

But just to think that down to this time with all those grownish girls, some of whom were as pretty and as lovely as any young man in this whole world ought to wish to have presented for his selections, Old Gus had not fallen in love! But both Sarah Ann and Miranda had told him that the only reason was that his time had not yet come.

"The only differenth, Mithter Old Guth," Miranda often said, "ith in the timth it comth on people. Ith thertain to come on you thome time, ain't it, Tharann? And then won't he be a thight? I hope I'll be there to thee it."

"Certainly it's going to come some time," answered Sarah Ann, "and when he's not expecting it; and then no more crab-apples nor nothing else for *us;* because he'll be for just loading down his sweetheart with them—Susan Leadbetter or somebody else."

"You talk, you jes talk, Sarann Shy,

like—like you thought you was as wise as—as the very Queen o' Sheby!"

"No, I'm not as wise—give me some more salt; these crab-apples are uncommon sour. That'll do—No, Mister Old Gus, I'm not quite as wise as all that; but I'm wise enough to know what I'm talking about, and you'll live to see it. You see if you don't."

And so he did. The time came at last, and with it the passion, and in a way so peculiar that it not only surprised him and everybody else, but troubled his mind during a considerable period.

CHAPTER IV.

IN those days no Georgia boy who thought much of himself failed, by the time he became fourteen or fifteen, to fall in love with some woman if it were only a schoolmistress or a widow. Yet htherto Old Gus, so far as the female sex was concerned, had seemed to have kept himself as cold as any frog. Some boys

who claimed to know all that was worth knowing about the human frame gave it as their opinion that he had never had any gizzard; and Martin Woodall, thirteen years old, who had been in love several times, went privately one day to Dr. Lewis, the physician of the village, who had attended Old Gus during the only spell of sickness which he had ever had, and asked him confidentially for his opinion on the case; and, having gotten it, came away and betrayed the secret which had thus been reposed in him.

"Boys," said Martin, loud enough to be heard by some of the girls, "it's so good I can't keep it, but when I asked Dr. Lewis he laughed and said Old Gus didn't have even a *sign* of a gizzard, and he said that, if he knew anything about the case, he never would. But you all mustn't say anything about it, because the doctor he told it to me as a secret."

But a change came over Old Gus. He quit personating not only the squirrel but the rabbit, although I think he parted from the latter with some regrets, partic-

ularly on account of the excellent influences it had exerted upon the physical development of Miranda and Sarah Ann, who began, toward the end of the year, to look, poor little things, as if they were about to make something of a start at last. But he told them one day that he had no heart for such as that any more, and he looked so awfully solemn when he was telling them that for a while they felt concern. They asked him what was the matter. He evaded an answer, but, after being pressed, he let it come, and it was as solemn in sound as any that was ever returned from the oracle of Delphi, or any other shrine:

"I have fell in love."

All of us laughed, for many others besides the two girls heard the confession. Then Sarah Ann and Miranda made him go off with them, when Miranda asked:

"Who ith it with, Mithter Old Guth?"

Sarah Ann declared that Miranda had taken the very words out of her mouth, and she said:

"Yes, do, please, Mister Old Gus, tell

us who it's with. Oh, I do think it is *so* interesting! Tell us, Mister Old Gus, please, quick!"

He looked sorrowfully down upon them, one with a hand in a pocket of his coat, the other with hers in that of his waistcoat, and answered:

"Ah, now, childern, right there's the deficulty. I can't."

"Can't! Oh, pshaw! You know you can, but you just won't, and I think it's mean of you."

Then Sarah Ann rammed her hand again into his pocket and said she was as mad as she could be. But Miranda said:

"Oh, Mithter Old Guth, I think you might tell me and Tharann, if for nothing elth, becauthe we've been good to you in letting you make uth take tho many whippinth for you. Why can't you?"

"Because I don't yit know myself, not quite, I don't."

And then while they were laughing loudly, he went away and sat down upon a stump where he pondered for a long

time. During the remainder of the time he told nobody, not even himself, as he often said, who it was that had effected the change in his feelings and deportment. For a while they suspected that it might be Susan Leadbetter; but one day when she asked for his dollar-one-and-nine knife, to mend her pen, he took it out, unwrapped it slowly, partly extended it toward her, but withdrew it, saying:

"I some ruther not, Susan. Give me your pen, and I'll mend it well as I know how."

"Never mind, Mister Old Gus; it makes no difference."

The fact was that the other girls had put forward Susan in order to find if she was his flame. She went away laughing, and after that Susan Leadbetter was dropped out of all calculations. For the time being, Martin Woodall was in love with Susan, although he had not the courage to tell her so in words; therefore he was glad of the happening of this incident, and said:

"It may be the old fellow is beginnin' to have some sort of a gizzard; but I doubt if it ever comes to anything worth speakin' about."

Considering the indefiniteness of its origin, it was indeed a very noticeable change. Occasionally Miranda or Sarah Ann drew from him a smile, which, however, was more woebegone than his habitual lugubrious expression. But they never could induce him to repeat the thrilling performances which, with such varying attendant circumstances, they had witnessed so often. Instead thereof he usually sat at his desk almost motionless during school hours, in which time he looked at the two girls with a look which was so mournful and so far away that occasionally they broke forth into the giggling, one of the results of which had been so benign that he was thankful for their sakes that they were not suspended entirely. His pockets came as usual weighted with cargoes; and after they were discharged, like any patient camel whose burden had been re-

moved, he slowly went off to himself. One day Miranda, impatient at such conduct, said to him:

"Mithter Old Guth Lawthin, I declare your conduct ith thimply oudathoth. What makth you won't do thothe funny thingth any more? I think ith mean ath can be!"

Hauling out handfuls of goodies and emptying them into her apron, he said:

"No, M'randy, I ain't, that is, I hope I ain't, so powerful mean. But a man person who he have once't fell in love th'ough and th'ough, like I am now, he don't feel like doin' them things."

"You don't *feel* like it!" she replied with disdain, as she cracked one of his chestnuts. "My opinion ith, your conthinth hurt you for making me an' Tharann get tho many whippinth. But we never minded that, did we, Tharann?"

"Of course not; I'd be willing to take a whipping any time to see him eat greens like a rabbit. If he was obliged to do something, he might be satisfied to take away our squir'l, but it was a sin

and a shame not to leave us our rabbit. Hand me out some more of those biggest chestnuts. Your hand can get 'em more convenient than mine can."

"Me too," said Miranda. "Mithter Old Guth Lawthin, 'you know I think your being in love ith moth ath funny ath the rabbit? I know ith ath funny ath the thquirrel. Who ith it with, we keep on athking you."

Driven to the very wall, he answered in sorely pleading tones: "I jes' *can't*, M'randy, because I don't know myself. I wish I could, and I wish I did; but if I did know who it was, you ain't big enough to understand the feelin'."

She regarded him for a moment with scorn, as the grinding of her chestnut was suspended. Perhaps reflecting that his ignorance of her capacity merited compassion rather than resentment, her grinding was resumed, and she answered:

"Right there you are mithtakened, thir, if you only but knew it. The very i-dea! Why I take the greateth *delight* in

hearing about love thtories, and I underthand 'em well ath you do, and better too; becauth, if I wath to fall in love, I'd know who it wath with, and you don't. I never heard, and I never even read of thuch a cathe. Lawth! Mithter Old Guth Lawthin, do try to thtop thome of that foolithneth, and let me and Tharann have thome fun. People are talking and laughing about you going on ath you do and hurting me and Tharann'th feelingth, when we are doing our betht to keep you from dithgrathe; and even Martin Woodall, thath alwayth been thuch a big man, he have to be going about telling people that you haven't got any githarth, or motht none at all, aknowing no better that nobody excepth chickenth *hath* githarth. But thuch ath that makth me and Tharann athamed of ourthelvth, and we don't know what to thay. Here, tie up in thith handkerchief thome of thothe betht chinkapinth, and do thop your foolithneth, becauthe, I tell you now, it maketh me and Tharann perfect mitherable. Don't it, Tharann?"

Sarah Ann's jaws were tired, but she managed to answer:

"That it does. He has actually got to that, if it wasn't for his pockets, I actually don't know what we would do."

"The good laws!" he pleaded pitifully, "How *is* a body to stop sech as that? Why he can't no more do it than he can stop the measles—not until the things break out on him."

"Well, then," said Miranda, "I with they'd break out on you, if that ith what'th the matter with you."

CHAPTER V.

AT the end of the term Old Gus took his final, most melancholy leave of the school. After this he kept himself more closely at home than ever before, and delighted his mother with the new interest shown by him in work. If Martin Woodall had been entirely fair in giving expression to his opinions, he would have been obliged to admit that,

however abnormal in his anatomical structure, the old fellow gave promise of making a man in some important elements of his being. He showed especial interest in the growth of the young among domestic animals. Often he said:

"Ma, I jes loves to see young things a-growin', if it ain't nothin' but a pig, or a chicken, or a peachy-tree sprout, because they ain't no tellin' what they goin' to pejuce if they're took keer of."

His mother had been saying all along that she had never a doubt but that 'Gustus would make a man some day when the time came; for his father before him had been just such a boy, and everybody that knew him said that he was one of the best that ever was born. And so he kept on for three years, attending with reasonable diligence to all work that his hands found to be conveniently necessary, his walk and conversation being marked by sobriety rather than the deep solemnity that had been brought on by the first unexpected attack upon his tenderest feel-

ings. It was not often that he met either Sarah Ann or Miranda; for, as the time elapsed, he more seldom left home. But he was thankful to hear from time to time that the development which he had contributed so liberally to foster was going on without much complaint. Whenever he met either, if she happened to rally him for what he had made her suffer for his pranks, he answered:

"And you know jest as well as I do that I done 'em for your good, and you got the good of 'em, and you started on the growin' you both of you needed, and I'm monstrous thankful you've kept it up."

One Sunday after meeting, together they met him, and asked if he had ever found out who it was he was in love with.

"Not yit," he answered. "Not quite yit; but my feelin's is that it'll come after a while. I ain't in a hurry about it."

"And what do you do mothly thethe dayth, Mithter Old Guth?" asked Miranda.

"Oh, I'm mostly raisin' chickens and sich."

"And do they grow to your thatithfaction?"

"It's differ'nt among 'em, M'randy. Some of 'em is rapid, and some is ruther mod'rate, like you and Sarann."

When he had gone, Sarah Ann said:

"Was there ever such a case in the world?"

"It ith curiouth, and ith the funnieth love cathe I ever heard anything about. But, Tharann, thinthe he quit thchool, it theemth to me he'th thome handthomer than he uthed to be, and hath better mannerth."

"Yes, no doubt about that. Indeed, I think he's got to be very passable. But I do wish the old fellow would come back to school, where we could see some of the fun we used to have."

"Ah, well! I thuppoth it ain't betht to have fun at thchool alwayth. Juth to think! It'th three whole yearth thinthe Mithter Old Guth left uth. I wonder if we'll ever be ath happy again,

Tharann. Ma thay I've got to quit tchool after thith year and learn how to work and keep houthe. It makth me thad to think about it, thometimeth."

"That's what they say about me. Well, since Mister Old Gus quit, I've seen so little fun that I'm ready to stop whenever the word comes."

In those times country girls usually got their full growth by the time they were fifteen or sixteen years old, and it was thought well for them to leave school to begin to learn all about domestic work, and, if a good opportunity presented itself, to get married. Within these three years Miranda and Sarah Ann had improved much every way. Miranda, though yet rather small, was plump as any partridge, and to some looked even sweeter. Sarah Ann was large and luscious. Both had become more serious, and Mr. Hodge said openly that he had never turned out two girls who were better scholars. They left school without complaint, and went cheerfully to work. For some time before the end of

their last term neither of them had seen Old Gus. He had been keeping himself for the most part about home, and everybody was talking about what a fine, domestic person he was getting to be. As for Susan Leadbetter, she had been married long ago and moved away somewhere on the other side of the Oconee. The world, they say, waits for nobody. Yet Old Gus, patient as the longest days, had been waiting, waiting, waiting, and not even his mother ever heard a word of complaint from his mouth.

CHAPTER VI.

A QUIET, harmless life was that during these three years. By slow gradations Old Gus had taken into his hands the conduct of plantation business, and was making as respectable crops as any. During this time, few summer evenings had been more serene than his life. Yet, not long after the last school term, his mother suspected that she

noticed some little restlessness in his deportment. Occasionally at night, after decently getting through with his chicken, biscuit, and coffee, he would look sternly and mysteriously at his saucer of clabber, and then, leaving it untouched, rise, go out, and walk a while on the piazza or in the yard. His mother did not think it best to allude to these symptoms, but waited to see what was to come of them, trusting, as had been her habit always, for the best. One night after supper he sat a long while in silence. Just before it was time to light his candle and go to bed he said:

"Ma, somethin' inside o' me have been a-workin' like it want to break out on me."

"Why, 'Gustus, my son, the measles *is* in the neighborhood, but I hain't been afraid of you a-ketchin' 'em, because you had 'em, and them thick as hops, as the sayin' is, when you weren't more than eight year old. But sometimes people does have the things twice't. I'll make some tansy bitters to-morrow, and have

it ready to fetch 'em out if it's them."

Little else was said upon the subject. At breakfast the next morning his mother noticed nothing out of the usual way except that he had on his linen shirt and looked a trifle bashful. She was not alarmed, however, because he put in a reasonably hearty meal. When it was over, taking his hat, he said:

"Ma, I'm goin' to step over to the Attaways awhile this mornin', and I may go on as fur as the Shys before I turn back; but I'm toler'ble certain of gittin' back by dinner-time."

"All right, my son; but as you hain't been a-feelin' very well here lately, if I was in your place I'd try and not git over-het."

"I'll try to keep reason'ble cool," he answered to her affectionate admonition.

He walked on to the Attaways neither fast nor slow. Arrived there, he found Miranda, after having put away the breakfast things, getting ready to begin

on a pair of trousers that her mother had just cut for one of the negroes.

"Why, if it ain't Mithter Old Guth!" she said. "I'm glad to thee you. Take a theat, won't you?"

He seated himself, and as soon as he had an opportunity for a special remark, said:

"M'randy, I found out who it is; or at leastways I *think* I have."

"Who it ith what, Mithter Old Guth?"

And when she asked the question she knew just as well as he did; for she blushed, and her fingers trembled while she was threading her needle.

"Who I'm in love with. Come now, don't go to makin' out you don't know what's been the matter with me all this long time, M'randy. I thought by this time you got old enough, if not quite big enough, to understand what made me so solemn them last days I were at school, a-knowin' you weren't old enough then for sech as you to understand how dead in love I fell with you and Sarann."

"With me and *Tharann?*"

"Yes," he answered, looking toward her with moderate interest. "You and Sarann. Thar was the de-ficulty. I couldn't tell in my mind which was from which. Sometimes when I has heard Sarann's big, loud haw-haw, and see her nice white teeth, I thought't were her; but then when you'd look up at me and say somethin' with your little tongue-tied voices, and the cold chills, or ruther, I might say, the warm chills run all over me, I says to myself, 'No; it must be M'randy.' And so now, to the best of my knowledge, I think it's you. And besides, you live closeter to us, and it's conven'enter. And so here I am."

Miranda, now red as a June apple, threw down her work, and, looking at him with glittering eyes, said:

"I'd have no man on the top of the ground that came at me a-courting me in thuch a—myththeriouth thort of way!"

"Oh, well then," he replied resignedly; "I thought I'd try you first. If I don't suit you, M'randy, I'll peruse on to the

Shys and see if I can do anything with Sarann."

He turned his head, as if looking for the place where he had put his hat.

"I never *thaw* thuch a perthon!" said Miranda, almost crying, "that he take a girl by thurprithe, and before thee have time to even think about what he thay to her, flare up mad becauthe — becauthe——"

"Now, right there, M'randy," mildly interrupting her, "you're mistakened in your mind about my flarin' up mad. I ain't mad; and as you say you been took by surprise, I'm goin' back home, and I'm goin' to stay there one whole, solid week, and then I'm a-comin' back. What do you say, M'randy?"

"I thay you do jutht ath you pleathe. There!"

The words were positive, but Old Gus thought that he could see that the tone was subdued. So he rose and said:

"Good-by, M'randy. I shan't go to the Shys to-day; not to-day, I shan't."

After he had gone Miranda reported

everything to her mother, and ended by saying:

"I don't care whether he comth back any more or not; I juth don't, and I ath good ath told him tho. Now!"

After some reflection the mother said:

"Of course, M'randy, in such matters people has to act according to the way their feelings is; but if it was me, I should hisitate before I turned off a young man that was of good respectable people, and good prop'ty to boot, and that all the old people said what a studdy, well-doing young man 'Gustus Lawson was. And as for his addin' in of Sarann, that wouldn't be nuther here nor there with me, straightforward person like him, that I wouldn't be surprised if he didn't do it just to let you see that he couldn't be fooled with nor neither put off too long. Many a young man does such as that with girls, and even when they're most in yearnest. But, of course, my daughter, you'll have to answer accordin' to your feelings. He give you a plenty of time to think about it."

On the morning appointed by him here came on Old Gus, in whose eyes Miranda was glad to think that she could observe some little eagerness.

"Well, M'randy?" said he, after being seated.

"Mithter Lawthin, I've talked with ma what you athed me, and if it wathn't for what you thaid about Tharann——"

"Right thar now, M'randy — right thar," he broke in with a quickness entirely unknown theretofore, "let me interrup' you. I had a talk with *my* ma too, and ma she said I had no business a even namin' of Sarann's name on sech a errant, and if it had been her, she say, she'd a got mad as fire jest like you did. And then ma up and says to me: 'Gustus Lawson, *you* mayn't know it, but *I* do; and it's that you don't love Sarann Shy, but it's Mirandy Attaway you're in love with, and has been in love with her ever sence her and you went to school to Mr. Hodge. And now I tell you, M'randy, that right thar the thing broke out all over me, and I see ma were right. Not

that I has any disrespects of Sarann; but the one I want for myself is you, and I want you bad."

Their union was speedy, and it became very happy. Many persons from time to time heard the following remarks:

"The way thome women are alwayth bragging about their huthbandth ith juth thimply tirethome to me. I'm not one of that kind of perthonth mythelf; but my private opinion ith I've got the betht in thith whole thtate, and I don't care who knowth I thaid tho."

An Adventure of Mr. Joel Bozzle.

"AND my opinion is, that if the people that made the law about hangin' of people had a had any ideas of the thing I saw in town to-day, and from whut people told me about it, they'd of provided somethin' else besides a rope fer the executin' o' the law."

This declaration was made one night to the wife of his bosom by Mr. Joel Bozzle, after a remarkable experience had by him on that day at the county seat. A dweller in the lower, piney woods district, a poor man, but an industrious and reasonably thrifty one, he seldom went to town. But this year his region had its candidate for the Legislature, and all the neighbors felt that it behooved them to repair to the court-

house on election day so as to make as strong an impression as possible in his behalf. So Mr. Bozzle rode twelve miles to the town, entering it peacefully, even modestly, hitched his horse at the very lowest end of one of the racks in the public square, and then looked around him. The long ride, he felt, had imparted to him a thirst. Not wholly ignorant of interesting places, he sighted out first the grocery of Mr. Nicholas Harbuckle and, but neither too rapidly nor very slowly, made his way thither. Quite a number of other voters were already there preparing themselves for the responsibilities that the day had devolved upon them. Mr. Bozzle stood for several moments at one end of the counter and patiently waited to catch the eye of one of the bar-tenders. When he had succeeded, he said, in a low, respectful tone, that if it was entirely convenient he would like to have a drink. Contemporarily with the remark, like any other honorable man would have done, he laid his thrip upon the counter. When the decanter

was brought, he poured what he thought was fair, added a not unreasonable quantity of water, and raised the tumbler to his lips. Not being, and never having been, one of that kind of persons that would gulp down a good thing at one indecent swallow, and then forego every pleasant detail in such a luxury—moreover, being a man that liked for any thrip expended by him to go as far as it could—he was letting trickle down his throat some of what Mr. Harbuckle had said was the best article that he had. Not more, or but a little more, than half the potation had gone to the place intended for it, when suddenly a voice sounded in his ears more commanding than any that he remembered to have heard in all his previous experience. The words were:

"Cle'r the way thar! You country people think you got to do *all* the drinkin' here to-day? If so, all I got to say some of you'll find yourself mistakened."

The voice was so harsh and irate that

Mr. Bozzle hastily put down his tumbler and looked behind, although the sound seemed to him to have come up out of the floor. Seeing nothing specially alarming, and noticing smiles on the faces of some of the bystanders, he was proceeding to lift his tumbler again when the same words or their equivalents came grating up his legs and his sides, jarring him so that, looking down, he discovered an object that he never forgot. In a small vehicle, three feet by two, which was propelled by a negro boy, lay a large, handsome face, covered with a luxuriant beard. This seemed to be all that the cart contained, except some small hands at the extremities of two short arms lying upon a calico rug, that, beginning at the chin of the occupant, extended to the end. Mr. Harbuckle, leaning over the counter, handed down a toddy and said:

"Come, Poly, take this, and don't be raising a fuss in here. Back him out, Bob, in the street where he can splurge to his satisfaction."

"Never you mind, Nick," said the face as it was hauled out.

Mr. Bozzle had stood wondering what use a mere head could have, and what disposition it could make of a drink of whiskey, when he heard from the outside, in yet louder, harsher language:

"Haul me to the cote-ouse, you fool."

Mr. Bozzle, having finished his grog, said respectfully:

"Mr. Harbuckle, won't you please tell me what that thing were?"

"Oh, that's Poly Cobble, the littlest, 'flictedest creetur that ever were born. They is mighty nigh nothin' of him, exceptin' what you see; but he's not much trouble to people exceptin' for his sass, and people, first one and then another, lends a little nigger boy to his mother to help take keer of him. He's sorter troublesome sometimes; but law me! what is people to do with jes' sech a case?"

Mr. Bozzle came out and, while he was standing still watching the moving vehicle, a well-dressed young townsman,

having on his hands nothing in particular, said to him:

"Dangerous character, sir."

"That so?"

"Yes, indeed. People might take more interest in the pitiful little thing, 'twasn't for his cussedness in general. I advise people he don't know to keep clear of him, 'specially after he has drunk thirty or forty drinks and begins flourishing his pistol around."

If ever there was an independent voter who, however modest and inoffensive, felt himself at liberty to indulge himself in a recreation not too expensive on election day, it was Mr. Bozzle. After depositing his vote, he thought he would circulate himself around somewhat before returning home. There was but one thing that subtracted from his entire enjoyment of himself, and that was the little cart and its contents, which he met oftener than he cared after his first curious study of him. At such times he freely gave way to the vehicle, once, when the throng was dense, almost having

to step over it. Once again, when he was in the very midst of a shout for his candidate, he heard beneath him the words:

"Stop that hollerin', you fool, for that man. He's no 'count. Gwine to be beat, too."

The shout died in Mr. Bozzle's throat, or in his jaws, as, spreading his legs, he hastily let those fragmentary parts of humanity get out.

It was growing toward that period of the day that country people usually call the shank of the evening, when it occurred to Mr. Bozzle that, if he expected to get home at the reasonable hour he had fixed in his mind before leaving, it was time that he were making a start thereto. He would have gone before now but for a sort of fascination in Poly, which, in spite of his awe, an occasional additional drink or something else fastened upon him. For half an hour or so he had followed, at respectful distance, the cart, and listened with eager interest to the harsh ejaculatory mandate to people to

get out of the way. From one last searching look he was turning away, when two men came along where he was standing, each with a chicken-cock under his arm.

"Hello, boys," said the young man to whom allusion has been made, and who now was watching Mr. Bozzle with amused interest, "going to have a fight?"

"Yes, Frank; behind Nick Harbuckle's grocery."

"That'll be worth seeing, cert'n," he said, looking at Mr. Bozzle kindly. The latter glanced up toward the sun, and decided, as it seemed, that he might afford to witness at least a portion of the coming sport. So he followed the gamesters, and succeeded in obtaining a satisfactory position near the cock-pit, and was pleased to see the pleasant young man come up and put himself by his side. The men were nearly through with fixing the gaffs, when coming up out of the ground under his feet, louder than at any time before, harsher, more threatening, were these words:

"If some o' you country crackers don't cle'r the way, and give people a chance to see this fight, I'm goin' to shoot."

"My Lord!" said Mr. Bozzle, actually plunging backward until he reached Mr. Harbuckle's back door.

"Well you may say, 'My Lord!'" said the young man who followed him.

"Is they danger in the thing a-shootin', shore enough?"

"Great deal; but not with them he knows and likes. Poly likes me; but the mischief is that, blazing away in a crowd like this, a fellow might git lead in him accidently. I told you to look out for him."

"Yes, you did, and I'm a thousand times obleeged. Won't you step in and have a drink?"

"I don't care if I do," he answered politely.

After they had drunk, Mr. Bozzle said:

"Did it ever shoot anybody in actual fac'?"

"If you hadn't give way to him just

now, you'd have seen if he did, that is, provided a dead man can see anything."

"My Lord! and hain't it never been took up for it?"

"Yes, indeed; but law! what's the use? Yes, sir, time and time ag'in has he been took up and tried for murder and found guilty, and time and time ag'in has the sheriff tried to hang him, and had to give it up as a bad job."

"Will you—will you please explain that matter, if you please, sir?"

"Well, my friend, the gaffs is about fixed on them chickens, and I must go back and try to git a place out o' range o' Poly's pistol. I'll tell you how it is in a few words. He's above the law, Poly Cobble is, and I'll tell you for why. You see the onliest way the law have for killin' people is hangin'. Well, now, sir, the only thing about Poly Cobble that have any solid weight worth talkin' about is his head; and when the sheriff puts the rope 'round his neck and h'ists him up, his head turns, the balance of him, what they is, flops up, and there

he hang a-gigglin' until the sheriff out o' disgust cut him down, put him in his cart, call Bob, and order em to take themselves off out o' his sight. Bye-bye."

Two minutes afterward he said to Poly:

"You scared that piny woods fellow, Poly, but I got a treat out of him. Can you see down there?"

"First rate. Whyn't you make him treat me too?"

"The idea! Didn't you see how he run from you?"

"I jes' wanted to have a little fun out the feller, and you know you put me up to it. Lend me a sebnpence to put on that red."

After the fight was over, the young man and Poly came into the grocery, when Mr. Harbuckle said to the former:

"Frank, you had no business botherin' that man so about Poly. He's a good man, if he is from the piney woods; and if he'd knowed how you was projeckin' you'd of got a fight on your hands. He ain't afeared o' people, exceptin' jes'

sech as Poly, that he see he can't hit back. And as for you, Poly, the next time when I've got customers in here, and you git hauled in here and begin on your imp'dent talk to people that don't know you, I'll put you and your k'yart out'n my sto', and I'll give Bob a kick as he haul you off. You git nary 'nother drink from me to-day 'ithout you pay for it er somebody treat you."

As both had been broken by their investments, they had to depart.

Mr. Bozzle by this time was far on his way home. It was long before he could be reassured that somewhere, in the judiciary system of the State, there must not be a flaw which hindered its being wholly adequate for the infliction of proper punishment upon all varieties of criminals. But when he was, he availed himself of the first good opportunity to go to the court-house. As he alighted from his horse the young Mr. Frank and Mr. Cobble of uncertain age were in front of one of the stores on the public square.

"Yonder come your piney-woods man,

Frank," said Poly. "Push me home, Bob, right away."

The vehicle moved off, and Mr. Frank moved back into the store. Mr. Bozzle, entering, asked if there wasn't a young man in there that people called Frank.

"He was in here jest a minute ago, Mr. Bozzle, but he stepped out the side door as if he was in a hurry. Do anything for you to-day, Mr. Bozzle?"

"No, sir; not 'ithout you could show me how to come up along o' that young man," was the calm answer.

He walked briskly out at the side door, and, observing Mr. Frank some thirty yards in advance, hailed to him. Mr. Frank broke into a run, and so did Mr. Bozzle, but, after a five-minutes' chase made in vain, he decided to give it up for the present.

When he returned, the merchant asked if he had found the one he was looking for; he answered:

"Couldn't quite overtake him."

"Must have had some important business with him, Mr. Bozzle."

"Ruther," he said, and after having rested a while, repaired to the rack, and, remounting his horse, rode away, not quite, but much nearer, satisfied with his country's institutions.

A Moccasin Among the Hobbys.

I VERY well remember Little Joe Hobby, who, when, I was a child was one of my father's near neighbors and friends. He was not so very, very little. They called him so in distinction from a big cousin of the same name. Everybody liked him. Even Maggy Tiller over and over again said that she thought a great deal of Joe. Yet she gave her hand in preference to the big cousin, and so Little Joe, sorrowful as it all was, had to bear it as well as he could. Maggy, noticing at her very last refusal how hardly he took it, offered the consolation which at such a time, if a girl would only reflect for a moment, is the very poorest to be thought of. She told him to never mind, for that it

wouldn't be so very long before he would find a girl to suit him to a *t*, and then he would be just running over with joy that he hadn't married Maggy Tiller. Indeed, Maggy was very sorry for his distress; so she must say something, and she didn't know of anything better. Then he rose, and, after shaking good-by, said:

"No, Maggy, I can't get you; but I'll never marry anybody else."

He went to the wedding and with the other guests extended congratulations, and partook with reasonable zest of the good things. Afterward he was as good a neighbor as before, and a good cousin to both. My father said—but of course only in the family—that if he had been in Maggy Tiller's place he would have taken Little Joe, and let Big Joe go somewhere else; for in his opinion, Little Joe was more of a man; and so, he suspected, thought Maggy's mother. However, he added, nobody can ever foresee what girls will do in such cases.

Joe—Little Joe, I mean—tried to go

along about as he had been doing before his bad luck, as he called it; for he never denied a single thing. But he was as healthy in mind as in body, and he felt that if Maggy and the other Joe could do well, so far as he was concerned, they were entirely welcome to do so. Indeed, he was a better friend to them than Jim Hobby, Big Joe's next older brother, whom Maggy had cast aside also, and who, in a pet went off and married Mandy Brake, who wasn't as pretty as Maggy and had rather poor health besides.

And they did do well—that is, moderately well. If Big Joe's industry, management, and prudence had corresponded with his physical proportions, they would have done splendidly. As it was, out of the good piece of ground which they owned, they made quite enough to live on, and perhaps a trifle over; but not nigh what Little Joe, who continued to live with his mother, contrived to put aside yearly for rainy days.

The two families lived only a mile

apart, and visiting continued to be kept up the same as if nothing had happened. In decent time after the birth of their baby, Little Joe went over there and handed around his congratulations again. When the baby was named Joe, he had to congratulate again; and he did so, like the man he was. It may have seemed to him somewhat monotonous whenever he was there that the father was everlastingly saying that in some points, indeed in almost every single blessed point, he had not a doubt that that baby was ahead of anything of its age that could be found in the whole State, let alone the county.

"Why, Joe," he said, more times than his hearer could recall, "Maggy'll tell you herself that sometimes I have to loose my mule from the plough half an hour before the dinner-horn blows, I want to see him so bad. Look'ee here, Joe," he said nigh as many times to the baby, "you know who that is sitting in that chair? You don't? Why, that's your cousin Joe, same name as you. Not named after him, exactly, but all the

same. Ask cousin Joe if he don't wish he had a Joe like you."

At such times Maggy smiled a little scold; but it did no good. He would go on about it, and keep at it, not even stopping at the dinner-table, occasionally getting up and making Little Joe get up, repair to the bed or the cradle whereon that baby was lying, and note how, when he was not crowing, he would be trying, just for the fun of it, to ram his fists or the coverlet into his ever-open mouth. And then sometimes he would crown all by crying to the youngster about thus:

"Going to be a big man some day, aren't you—a heap bigger than cousin Joe?"

Such things he did often, not from any thought of malice toward his cousin, but out of mere exuberance of the consciousness of his superiority to him. Little Joe endured it all, and did what he could in simple ways to help them along. Once, when the baby was thought to be dangerously sick, he went there at nights, and, while the father slept, watched with the

mother during the silent hours. Before Big Joe was awake next morning he would be gone to his work. During that time Jim Hobby never once came there. His wife did, and wanted to help; but Maggy, knowing that she was not strong enough to do any good, thanked her and sent her home.

One would think that such as that ought always to come to an end. Sometimes it does, as in this case it did. Early in August, when the baby was only a few weeks old, Big Joe got sick himself. People said it was from having had too much Fourth of July. Whatever was the cause, no sort of medicine, old women's nor doctors', could cure him; and so he died, leaving Maggy a poor lonesome widow. With her baby she moved back to her mother's, and it was not so very long before she began to look as bright as ever, and perhaps some prettier.

I could not undertake to say exactly how Little Joe felt on the occasion of his cousin's death; but he said and he

did what was becoming—no more, no less. He helped to put him away decently, and then helped Maggy to do what was to be done before she could get back to her native place. As for the baby, while he did not—because he could not—show the pride which its father indulged, yet he was even more considerate of its wants. It was only a few minutes' walk to the Tiller's, and he went there almost every day. The devotion shown by him toward that baby was not without its return, as it was not long before the latter showed himself to be as well pleased with his cousin's society as ever he had been with that of his father. Even Jim began to take an interest which he had not shown in his brother's lifetime.

During the summer days of the following year, when Maggy's work took her out of the house, she put the baby in his cradle, which she had removed to a nice spot in the shade of a large Mogul plum tree that stood not far from the dairy. Occasionally she went by to see if any

wood-insect had invaded his couch, or, if he was awake, to have a little chat by way of reassuring him against any sense of abandonment or too profound solitude. For he was not one of those exacting babies who are everlastingly wanting to be waited on, and shaken up, and sung to, claiming all the attention they can get, and more besides, not only in the day but in the very night. What that baby wanted, after his many meals and his as many sleeps, was the consciousness that congenial society was in convenient call. His health was as perfect as the very morning, and whenever he cried you might feel sure either that a pin was sticking somewhere, or that something else was the matter which no grown-up person could be expected to endure without complaint. At such times, when Little Joe was there, he hovered around that cradle as if the most precious of his treasures lay therein.

Such devotion, in all the circumstances, must have touched any heart, unless it were of stone. Yet when, toward the be-

ginning of fall, Little Joe began to plead as once before he had done so all in vain, Maggy cried and begged him to stop it. He did as he was bidden, but with an inward resolve not to stop for good as long as things stood as they were. For she showed as plainly as day, even to the humble Little Joe, that she didn't want him to quit coming to the house, particularly now that Mrs. Jim Hobby had died and so another gloom had been thrown over the family.

"Mrs. Tiller," said my father one day to Maggy's mother, who had come over to our house, "you tell Maggy from me that if Joe Hobby wants her she's making a great mistake not to take him. Between you and me, I think she made it before."

"Of course she did, and I think she knows it; but you know she's a right young widow, and she thinks she ought to behave shy."

"Pshaw! You tell her that when you told me that, I said 'Pshaw!' —not one blessed thing but 'Pshaw!'"

"And then, you know, squire, poor Mandy, Jim's wife, is dead now, and he'll be against Joe all he can. He have already been making his insinuations that Joe comes over to the house oftener than he thinks is either called for or is perfect delicate."

"Confound Jim Hobby! Wants her himself, and he isn't worth half as much as his brother. You tell her I said so."

And she did tell her, and in time this message, or something else, seemed to begin slowly having some little effect, when an event occurred to expedite it.

Little Joe would have been ashamed to be called a hero if he had known what that meant. Yet in the action which I am now going to tell, my father used to say that there was as heroic behavior as much of that one reads of in the careers of those who

> subdue
> Nations and bring home spoils with infinite
> Manslaughter.

Among venomous reptiles in the South-

ern States, next to the rattlesnake, the one most dreaded is the moccasin. Its bite, except upon very young persons, is seldom fatal; but very often its victim has to lose some portion of the limb which has been struck. The most prompt treatment is necessary to prevent much suffering and other serious consequences. I shall let Little Joe speak for himself about an encounter which he had with one of those reptiles.

One morning, having come over to our house on some little matter about the line-fence, as he was ascending the steps of the piazza, my father said:

"Good-morning, Joe. Why, hello! what's the matter with your thumb, that you've got it wrapped in that cloth?"

"Mornin', squire. Then you hadn't heard about my snake fight?"

"No, indeed. I've been away from home for a couple of weeks, getting back only last night. It seems you got the worst of it."

"I did for a while; but I come up with him before it was all over."

"My goodness, man! But I'm very glad it was no worse."

"So am I—thankful to boot. What time it lasted, it was a right serious business, countin' in my skear, and Maggy's too."

"Ay, was Maggy in it also?"

"Not in the fight, she wasn't, but in the skear she were worse off than me; fact is, she couldn't help it, bein' of her own baby."

"My! my! Tell me about it."

Smoothing tenderly the cloth around his thumb, he began:

"It was a Thursday three weeks ago. I walked over to Missis Tiller's, I reckon the sun were about a hour or a hour and a half high. Maggy were a-sweepin' the front yard about the gate. Her ma were gone over to Missis Keenum's, and the baby was layin' in the cradle asleep under that big plum-tree, you know, squire, there by the dairy."

"Very well. Finest Mogul plum-tree in the neighborhood."

"Jes' so. Well, soon as I got in the

yard and shook hands with Maggy, I went on silent to see the baby, who him and me are first-rate friends, we are."

"So I heard. Go ahead."

"When I got there, lo and behold! there were a great big full-grown highland moccasin quiled up on the baby's breast, all exception of his head and his neck, which stood high up, and his eyes a-viewin' of the child, like he were studyin' where he'd begin on him. I holloed out, I did, and Maggy she come a-runnin' up; but I pushed her back and told her to stay back and keep silent. She done it. She put one hand on her breast and lifted the other toward the sky. At that minute Jim come in the gate, and he run up to see what were the matter. Then he told me to stay there and watch the snake till he could run in the garden and cut a forked stick and prong him with it. So Jim he left, and the fight begun. Soon as the thing saw me, he whirled his head away from the baby and fixed for a strike at me. And, squire, it were the fieriest, beautifullest thing you

ever laid your eyes on. He were certain, well as I were, that it were a life-and-death case; because there wasn't any chance for him to get away into the woods, and no doubt he saw fight was in me. But I didn't have one blessed thing except my hands, and if I'd had a stick, the question would been what to do with it, him a-layin' there on the baby. To make things worse, he woke, the baby did, and he begun a-smilin' at me, and I were skeared nigh out of my senses, thinkin' he might kick or throw up his hands, so the snake would turn on him again. Then I got mad, sure enough, and I said to myself, 'No, sir, not that baby. If it's got to be anybody, it shall be me.' Every time I made a grab at his neck he dodged and struck at me. Well, sir, it's wonderful how supple the thing were. I thought I had him once or twice, but he slipped from my fingers like a piece of ice, and mighty nigh as cold, and several times with his strike he were in the width of a hair of gettin' me. All of a sudden I thought of my hat and

thinks I to myself, 'Blast you, I'll try to hive you!' And I done it, after a few wipes at him; but as I was pressin' him down he put his tooth in the ball of my left-hand thumb. But I grabbed him by the tail, give him a whirl or two like a whip-thong, then, fetchin' a jerk, slung his head off. You know that's the quickest way in the world to kill 'em. Then Maggy come up, she did, and she snatched up her baby, who was kickin' his level best at the fun; but I told her to lay him down for a minute, take a twine string out of my coat-pocket, and tie it tight round my thumb where I were holdin' it. For don't you know, squire, it come to my mind that very minute of Jay Robert's losin' his whole thumb three years ago that a moccasin bit, and that under the water? Yes, sir, that it did. Maggy screamed, but she done as I told her. Then I told her to go and make a pot of red-pepper tea, boilin' hot, not thinkin' there was a drop of sperits in the house. Soon as she got away, I hauled out my knife. I give it a wipe or two

on the bottom of my shoe, and then—— Well, squire, whoever thinks there's fun in cuttin' off their own thumb at the j'int, they're welcome to it. But I grinned and got through with the job, and by that time Maggy's ma got back. She told Maggy to fling that pepper tea away and then she got out a level tumblerful of whiskey and come out and made me drink every drop of it. And then, while Maggy was fixin' to tie up what was left of my thumb, she, a-knowin' I couldn't carry all that load of whiskey, she made me go to bed, and tell you the truth, squire, I never remembered another thing till the next mornin' daybreak, when I woke up, callin' for water."

"But where was Jim all this time?"

"They told me after it was all over that Jim come back with his forked stick, a-sayin' it took longer than he thought to get one to suit. Missis Tiller said she thanked him, and told him that he better put it away keerful, as it might come in handy next time."

"That's Jim; that's exactly Jim," said

my father. "But, Joe Hobby, don't tell me you came away from that house without getting Maggy's word, after what I told you of the importance of being brisker in some of your ways, especially since Jim has become a widower."

"Oh, no, sir! I thought it were a good chance to follow up your advice, and I put in for her as well as I could; and she said that, in all the circumstances, she wasn't sure but what it were her duty."

"That's good! that's first-rate!"

"But, law, squire! she declare she must put off the weddin' for at least one whole year."

"Nonsense! You tell Maggy from me, that, after all you've done for her and that baby, I say that I think it very hard to be putting you off so long, and that if any accident was to happen to you in all that lonesome while she'd never forgive herself."

He carried the words, and in a few days afterward reported that they had compromised on Christmas.

A Surprise to Mr. Thompson Byers.

I.

A MILE above the village of Red Oak, in a snug log-cabin, with a few acres bordering on the creek and the public road, lived the widow Rowell and her son Sandy, whose father, a few weeks before his birth, had been killed by a tree which he had felled. To him this little property, for a nominal price, had been set off by the owner from his large tract. A year or so before the occurrences herein narrated, this generous neighbor had deceased, and his land had been sold to a purchaser named Thompson Byers. Notwithstanding one sore infirmity of her son, Mrs. Rowell, who was liked and often helped by her neighbors, lived reasonably well. She raised no cotton,

but depended for money wherewith to buy such needed supplies as the place did not produce, on the sale of butter, chickens, eggs, and such other things as could be spared. They kept always a horse for ploughing their garden and patches for corn, potatoes, and such. The one last there having died, its place had been supplied by a large, good-conditioned mare named Becky, a present from Stephen Shepherd, a life-long friend of Sandy.

The attachment between mother and son was closer, perhaps, because, although at this period five-and-twenty years old, he was yet, except in growth of stature, a child, and destined to continue so as long as he lived. About five feet high, of stout build, his thick light hair covered a small head, whose face, in spite of its rather large front teeth, was handsome, and when in entire repose denoted much sweetness, as if in return for compassion he would like to render any service for which his small resources were competent. Yet even his bright, liquid gray eyes showed that within was a tem-

per quickly excitable to anger. His step was rapid—seldom, when out of doors and not accompanied by his mother, or not at work, confined to a walk. Mrs. Rowell had found it necessary always to curb his fiery spirit under strict rule, and now, while intensely devoted, he had the same dread of her displeasure as in earliest childhood. He not often went into the village alone, and at such times he hardly needed the orders not to delay after executing his errand; for in other society than that of his mother and Stephen Shepherd, he seemed to feel more or less of confused embarrassment. He seldom spoke, except when delivering his brief message or making known his simple wants. Talking in jerks, and with stammering, seemed a painful operation, as if he were conscious of the weakness of his understanding and ashamed of not being able to express his thoughts like others, and it was evident that he felt keenly the smiles sometimes indulged in by thoughtless persons at his essays, abortive as passionate.

Stephen Shepherd was a lawyer, living in his bachelor home on the northern edge of the village. A year or two younger than Sandy, they had always been warm friends, having grown up together, the Shepherds living a quarter of a mile farther out. A graduate of the State College, he continued to hold to his fondness for the simple folk and the simple things of his childhood. During his college years the weakling missed him sorely.

"It looks like the child just longs for you when you're away," the mother used to say to him when, shortly after his coming home at a vacation, he made them a visit. It was only once in a long while, and that upon affectionate, pressing invitation, that Sandy could be prevailed upon to spend the night with his dear friend; for somehow he could not feel quite at his ease to lie down for sleep except on his own bed in the little shed-room behind his mother's. Yet occasionally Shepherd, supported by Mrs. Rowell, who hoped for some benefit to

him from such a change, induced him, while on the homeward return from the village, to tarry; but the house-servant, on awaking next morning, would find his couch empty, its occupant, becoming home-sick, having stolen away at the dawn.

Mrs. Rowell, ever since Shepherd had settled and become a lawyer, had been going to him whenever she believed that she needed counsel in her business. As for troubles, but for her nighest neighbor, she would have had few worth mentioning. The infirmity of her son she regarded as a visitation from the good God, who, she felt that she knew, did not and could not mean it for anything but a mercy, whatever was its kind.

To people on the coming of Thompson Byers to live there, although a stout, well-shaped, hearty-enough-looking man, something about his eyes seemed wrong. He *could* open them as well as anybody, but when talking about trading, of which he was quite fond, he did not, except at intervals and for brief whiles. Yet they

did not hinder him from noting whatever was for his own advantage. Billy Ellis, a young farmer who lived next beyond him, said one day:

"He wanted that little corner of my land running into his, and as it would save rails for me I was willing to let him have it. I knew he was sharper with his eyes shut than when open, and so I thought I'd watch him close while he was making his long winks. You think he didn't see into my hand and get the land for six dollars an acre, when I found out afterward that he'd have given me eight, maybe nine? He's dying to get Mrs. Rowell's little corner; but Stephen Shepherd will have something to say about that, I guess."

Mr. Byers did want the land very much. For several months after taking possession of the adjoining property he had been very neighborly, doing more than his part of border-fencing and other favors, and once, with friendliest words and eyes closely shut, had suggested to Mrs. Rowell that perhaps, if she could

find a purchaser at a fair, even what might be called a good, price, he wouldn't be surprised if it might not be well to sell that place and buy another on higher ground somewhere, less subject to damp influences, and so forth. She answered with as much reserve as her simple, upright nature could command. He appeared to be satisfied with her words, and, after some other extremely cordial assurances, went away. On the next day Mrs. Rowell, having some occasion to go into town, called at Shepherd's office and reported what Byers had said.

"Mrs. Rowell," he answered, "do you have no business with that man except through me. When he mentions the subject again, as he is sure to do—for Billy Ellis says that he knows of his wanting the place—you might say that you might be tempted to accept an offer of thirty, or say forty, dollars an acre; but don't *agree* with him at any price, though, of course, he wouldn't give either of those figures. Tell him that you would not trade on any terms without first

consulting with me. Thompson Byers is smart, but not as much so as he thinks, although Billy says that he's the smartest man *he* ever saw."

"Yes," she answered, smiling, "Billy can't get over Mr. Byers' six dollars an acre for the strip he sold him, when he found he could have got eight, maybe nine."

Mr. Byers, a week afterward, was disgusted with Mrs. Rowell's cool, evasive answer to his direct questioning.

"Why, Mrs. Rowell, you talk about such big figures for this little old wet, crawfishy, wore-out scrap of ground and your house hardly fit for even the poorest sort of white folks to live in, when you know that good land all over the county can be had for from five to seven dollars!"

"I don't want to sell the place, Mr. Byers. The land is good enough for me and Sandy, and so is the house."

"Yes, and there's that boy's father's grave in your very garden to be always reminding you, and him too, if he had the sense to know, how he was killed. Seems

to me that people with the right sort of feelings would want to get clean away from such a place, specially when they can sell it for twice as much as it's worth, as I had made up my mind, just for the convenience of me and you both, that I'd give you ten dollars an acre, cash."

"As for my husband lying there in the garden, about such things people are not all alike, Mr. Byers. Some prefer to get away from such places; but I am one that don't. I'd rather stay where I can keep down the weeds and briars, and it has never done me any harm, that I can see, nor my poor boy either."

"Don't you think it made an idiot of him, madam?—the whole history of the business, I mean?"

Then he shut his eyes close, as if he would not like to see the full effect of this brutal speech.

Tears came into her eyes as, without show of resentment, she answered:

"Nobody but you, Mr. Byers, ever hinted such a thing as that to me, and I'm thankful to believe that you are the

only person that would have done it, or could have done it. *I* don't know the ways of Providence, although you appear to think *you* do. But I have never believed for one single moment, and I couldn't be made to believe, that that affliction was sent upon me just to make me suffer more than other people, or to drive me away from this place, where I'd rather live than anywhere else. I wonder you could have the heart to say such things to me, Mr. Byers."

"Oh, pshaw! I only meant to say something for your own good. Maybe I oughtn't to have said what I did about Sandy."

"If I ever do take a notion to sell," she said, as he rose, "I shall get Stephen Shepherd to attend to everything for me."

"Stephen Shepherd! Ah ha! Lawyer! Oh, yes! I know something about lawyers, and maybe you will, in time. Well, I only thought I'd like to straighten my line, if you'd sell on living terms; but if *you* can stand it, madam, I suppose I'll have to try to. If your object is sim-

ply to spite me and disoblige me, after all I've done for you, you can do it, of course; but I'll advise you not to let any more trespassing than you can help be done on my land. Morning, madam."

"Good-morning, sir. I shall be careful, as I've always been."

As he walked off he muttered:

"People that have no accommodation, nor no knowing what's best for their own selves, it puts a man——" The rest was kept within his breast. As he mounted his horse, he observed Sandy, who had just come from the garden with vegetables that he had been sent to gather for dinner.

"Hello, Elleegzander!" cried the parting guest: "hello, Elleezgander the Great! How's your corporosity this morning?"

Sandy looked at his mother, as if inquiring what he must answer.

"Say nothing, my child."

"Noth'n, sir," repeated Sandy.

Mr. Byers answered, smiling, "That's so, old fel," then rode away.

"What he w-want, mammy?"

"He wants us to move away and let him have this place. You wouldn't want us to go to live anywhere else, would you, my dear?"

"N-no'm," he answered, looking resentfully at the back of the retiring visitor.

"Then we won't," she replied, laying her hand upon his shoulder. He looked up into her face, happy at this assurance, and to her eyes seemed beautiful, very beautiful.

After that, no more favors were extended by this neighbor to the little family at the foot of the hill. Whenever he passed the house, if he spoke at all, his words were understood by Mrs. Rowell as gibes. Sandy, whenever he saw him, looked uneasy. Not that he was afraid; for he possessed uncommon physical strength and had the feeling of personal fear of no man. But Mr. Byers began to put upon them petty provokings that incensed him much, and it required pains both on his mother's and Shepherd's

part to appease him. The Byers part of the fence was not kept as it should have been, and Sandy had several times to drive out cattle that had broken into their little pasture-field. Hearing of these, Shepherd hired a man to split the rails needed, and assist Sandy in strengthening every weak point.

"Never mind Mr. Byers, Sandy," he said. "Whenever he gets too bad, you and I will take him down a bit."

"I k-kin do that, St-teevy, b-by myself."

"Oh, no! Not without I or your mammy says so. Hear?"

"Y-yes; I hear."

"All right."

II.

Some time during the still hours of a calm, sweet night, an event took place in the Rowell family which, though coming not entirely without her expectation, gratified the mother much, but, taking Sandy by surprise, lifted him into great delight. In the morning, a little before

sunrise, repairing to the stable with provender for Becky, surprised that she was not there waiting for her breakfast, he went out to look for her. She was found in a corner of the lot-fence, bending her neck downward, and whinnying affectionately to a little something on the ground, that looked as if it would like to get up if it knew how. Sandy, after a moment's gaze of wonder, ran to his mother and almost dragged her to the place.

"Why, Sandy, my darling, you scared me! Don't you see it's a colt that Becky's got? Oh, I'm so glad!"

The new-comer, after several essays, rose to his legs, that widely spread themselves in order to hold up the rest of him as he made for his first meal. When Sandy had taken in the situation, he looked in frequent quick alternation at the colt and his mother, whose hand he yet held. She was smiling to see how happy he was. A good man, even if he had been an artist, would have thought that it all made a goodly scene.

They named him Steevy, in honor of their best friend. He soon learned, after a fashion, to repay some part of the great love of his owner; for the mother said he was to be Sandy's own property. He grew fast, giving promise of making in time a good-sized, well-bottomed, honest horse; and doubtless he would have done so, but for what I will now relate.

As Sandy was in that respect, Steevy did not like to stay away from his dam too long at a time. So one day, when he was about a month old, Mrs. Rowell and Becky went on a short visit to a sick neighbor, feeling little doubt that Sandy and Steevy could take care of themselves for that little while. No sooner were their elders gone, than these two, thinking no harm of it, betook themselves to the pasture, and were having all sorts of fun possible on such a scale. After some time, they found themselves not far from the outer fence, being that portion which belonged to Mr. Byers. On the other side were feeding a couple of horses, one of which, espying Steevy, ran

whinnying to a rickety panel, and, pushing off several of the top rails, crossed over the gap. Steevy, doubtless mistaking the visitor (being of the same color) for his dam, ran to meet. Sandy, in alarm and wrath, rushed forth in loud imprecations, when the intruder turned and made exit, followed by Steevy. While scampering along the edge of the adjacent woods, at the firing of a shotgun Steevy fell. The gunner hastily withdrew, but not before he had been observed and recognized by Sandy. When the spot where Steevy had fallen was reached, two of his legs were found to have been broken. I could not tell how he was got home, how cared for till he died, and how bemoaned at and for a long time after the burial. As his coming had been the greatest happiness that Sandy had ever known, so his going became his most suffering sorrow. Even his mother shed many tears at his pining. But childhood, particularly that which is perpetual, cannot be too long unhappy. Stephen Shepherd promised him that the

slayer should be made pay enough money to purchase another colt, two more if he wanted them, and so after a little while, like other people, gifted and not, adult and young, he was consoled for the loss of an old love by expectation of another.

He didn't tell anybody so, but in his heart he thought that if the time was ever to come when Stephen Shepherd and himself were to take down Mr. Byers, it ought to be already on its way.

Not only did Mr. Byers not offer condolence for their domestic affliction like the other neighbors, but whenever he was about to pass the Rowells' he put his horse into a canter and looked straight before him. Yet, one morning, not long afterward, he paid a little visit there; for the sheriff on the preceding afternoon had left at his house a writ from the court. After cordial greeting, he said, looking, what time his eyes were open, out of the door:

"Mrs. Rowell, I don't know as ever I was so astonished when I found you had sued me for a hundred dollars for Sandy's

colt, that somebody told me was shot in my woods. I've tried to keep them town boys *out* of my woods *with* their guns, and I think it's hard for me to have to suffer for their wrong-doings, though I can't but doubt it was an accident. Still, as it happened *in* my woods, rather than have me and you bothered with a law-suit, I thought I'd come over and see if we couldn't make some sort of compromise."

Rising from her seat, with the air of one who had more important matters to look after, Mrs. Rowell said:

"Mr. Byers, you'll have to see Stephen Shepherd. I'm thankful that Sandy isn't here, and I'll be obliged if you'll leave before he gets back from where I sent him."

He left immediately, until he had remounted his horse holding his eyes open as much as their habit would allow. Feeling that it was now too late to do otherwise than defend the suit, although eager for a settlement, he went for learned counsel, and that to the wrong

man. In the legal profession, along with its very many great examples, are to be found always some who know neither how to counsel in cases, large or small, nor how to conduct them. Mr. Ryder, the lawyer sought by Mr. Byers, spoke with such contempt of the bare idea of a verdict against him upon the testimony of an imbecile, that he became rather ashamed of the anxiety which he had felt. In spite of all, however, during the interval before the trial, many times before his eyes, opened and shut, would appear the sad ghost of poor Steevy.

"MRS. NANCY ROWELL
versus
THOMPSON BYERS.
} ACTION ON THE CASE."

The call was made in a loud tone by the presiding judge. The parties announcing themselves ready, a jury was empanelled. Sandy came within the bar with much solemnity and was seated close to his mother. Occasionally he threw up toward the court a glance of great awe, but during most of the time

his constantly moving eyes darted alternately at his mother and his counsel. Mr. Byers he did not seem to notice at all. The latter looked surprised that such a crowd had followed the plaintiff into the court-room.

Shepherd opened this his first case with the following statement:

"May it please the Court: Gentlemen of the jury, this is an action brought by Mrs. Nancy Rowell to obtain compensation from Mr. Thompson Byers for the shooting of a colt. As her attorney, I have laid the damage at one hundred dollars. This sum is admitted to be more than the animal was worth, although, for some reasons, an important item in her little property. But in cases like this the law provides for the injured beyond mere pecuniary values, by exacting of the wrong-doer what is called *smart-money*, when wrongs are shown to have been inflicted in circumstances peculiarly aggravating. Such extra allowance, when you have heard the testimony, I hope we shall obtain by your verdict. I expect—

at least I shall offer—to prove that this colt was shot by the defendant upon his own premises, and that its having been thereon was due solely to his own neglect, if not his own malicious contrivance. I hope to make known the motives to this act by proof of a series of annoyances which he has put upon the plaintiff and her family, perhaps conscious of his power to violate with impunity the rights and feelings of those whose very weakness served to make them objects of his contempt. I shall offer to show, further, that at the time of firing the shot it appeared that he was aware of the unlawfulness of his act, or at least of some degree of risk in its perpetration. This, as I cannot but conclude was manifested by his attempt—fortunately for my client, without success—to screen himself from observation, by putting himself, immediately thereafter, behind the nearest large tree in his woods."

Suppressed groans were heard among the bystanders during the pause that followed these words. The opposing counsel

cast threatening frowns all about, and his client, but for the trembling of his eyelids, might have been taken for fast asleep.

"These facts, gentlemen," continued Shepherd, "I propose to prove by a witness who has been known to me intimately all my life, in whose veracity I have as much confidence as I have in that of any person of my acquaintance—indeed, a witness who was born, who has always lived, and who now is, wholly incapable of falsehood. If I do this, I shall count upon your verdict, if not for the full amount asked, then for such part as your honorable judgments shall decide to allow."

Turning from the jury, he said:

"Sandy, my friend, I'm going to ask you to tell the court and jury what you know about Mr. Byers shooting Steevy."

Mrs. Rowell taking his hand, they arose, and, moving to the witness-stand, turned facing the bar and the now large gathering without. Sandy perhaps had never kissed the Bible himself, but he

had seen his mother do so often. Then it was Stephen Shepherd who had asked him, and these satisfied him that it was all right.

So, taking the book, as he had been drilled, he put it to his lips, then handed it back.

"I object to the witness," said defendant's counsel.

"On what grounds?" asked the court.

"On the ground, please your honor, as counsel must know already, of incompetency."

"Incompetency for what?" asked Shepherd.

"Oh, my brother Shepherd! On the plain ground that he does not understand the solemnity nor the responsibility of an oath. *That's* the 'what for.'"

Then he turned himself and looked far above everybody's head.

"The court," replied Shepherd, "for its own satisfaction will interrogate the witness. Sandy, my boy, answer to the judge. He'll do right by you."

Imitating his mother, he looked up

with respect that could not have been greater if he had expected the judge to restore Steevy to life.

"Sandy, my good lad," asked the judge kindly, "do you know what it means to swear in the court-house?"

"N-no, sir."

Defendant's counsel again looked around, this time perhaps to read on men's faces admiration for the quickness with which he had stemmed this little flood.

"Do you know, Sandy," again asked the judge, "what would be done to you if you were to swear to a lie here?"

"N-never t-told no lie 'bout M-mis Byers. He sh-sh-shoot Steevy, and j-j-jump h-hind tree."

He was panting, and his eyes looked hot as two newly molten bullets. Louder groans and universal rose amid the crowd.

"*Silence!*" roared the sheriff.

Mr. Ryder, rising in fury, began thus:

"May it please this honorable court! I would *ask* if it is the *right* of counsel

to seek an advantage over my client by ——" Just then, loud enough to be heard by the speaker, not quite by the judge, Shepherd said:

"Mr. Ryder, I suggest that you be careful how you speak of me."

"The court does not wish to hear from you, Brother Ryder," said the judge; then his look at Shepherd indicated that he would prefer the withdrawal of the witness rather than have to pronounce openly upon his evident incompetency.

"I shall have to suffer a non-suit, your honor," said Spheherd.

Turning toward his opponents he said, in a voice not high, but trembling with indignation:

"Well, sirs, you may take your verdict. I'll try what can be done by the grand inquest of the county in this case! God Almighty is not going to allow this 'one of his little ones' to be so offended and outraged without *some* degree of satisfaction!"

Then, in louder tones, with a finger pointing at the defendant, he said:

"Sandy, come down. Mr. Byers won't let you talk. Maybe he thinks you've told a lie."

Jerking away from his mother, the infuriated boy literally threw himself upon his adversary, and, when fallen, clutched his throat. When his hand was wrenched away, diving his head, he fixed his teeth in the man's shoulder. There they clung, even when his body was lifted by the sheriff and one of his bailiffs, and they had to be pried apart by the hands of both.

For years afterward, Mr. Ellis was fond of talking to the young and to strangers about these things:

"And the scaredest, pitifullest-looking human that I ever saw in all my born days, when he was let up, was that same Thomp. Byers. And you ought to've been there to hear the shouting and the roaring! The judge made the sheriff clear the court-house quick; but everybody could see that he were glad of it. It was plain as day that God Almighty made up his mind that *he'd* settle that

case himself. We used to accuse Stephen Shepherd of setting Sandy on him, but he never would acknowledge it; still, he never denied it out and out, and from that day law-business began to pour in on him. Thomp. Byers knew better than to let the grand jury get hold of *him*. Besides, people said that he was afraid all the time that Sandy might come up with him on a sudden some day and choke him to death, or eat him up alive. So he paid up the case, costs and all, and, soon as he could sell out, he put off for the Mississippi. And—would you believe it? it's so—that same man got a piece of my land once for six dollars an acre, and I found out afterward that he'd have given me eight, maybe nine. I get mad with myself every time I think about it. Oh, he was smart; a heap smarter than me. In some things, *I* think that Thomp. Byers was about as smart a man as ever I came up with."

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